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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SOCIAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES

by

MARY JO FULLER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1988

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Social Issues of Interest to Sixth Grade Students: Implications for the Teaching of Social Studies submitted by Mary Jo Fuller in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Education.

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this exploratory study was to discover what social issues were of interest and concern to sixth grade students. It was a further intent of the study to determine the need for a social-issues, problem-solving component for the social studies program in the district where the study took place.

A total of 141 sixth grade students and four of their teachers participated in part or whole throughout the study. The study took place at a middle school in a rural area of Washington State during the month of May in 1986.

A variety of methods were employed in the study, including direct questioning, drawing pictures, generating problems of concern in various categories, analyzing problematic situations from pictures, interviewing, and surveying. The number of methods aided greatly in eliciting a generous amount of information from the students regarding social issues of interest and concern.

The results of the research indicated that most sixth grade students view the purpose of social studies to be the study of history. The findings also revealed a number of relevant questions the students had, many of which would be considered social issues. Insight regarding the causality of the emotions of happiness and sadness, was provided through student drawings.

The results of specific social-issue generating activities indicated a variety of problems students were

experiencing in their own lives and in their environments, as well as an awareness of problems occuring in society and the world. It was further revealed, however, that most students had a fairly low level of skills and experience in dealing with problem-solving activities related to social issues.

From the results of the final phase of the study which involved the surveying of students and teachers in the areas of curriculum topics, social-issue topics, and instructional/learning methods, several trends emerged. First, student memory was better for more commonly taught topics. Second, standard curriculum topics were remembered better ($M = 55.9\%$) than social-issue topics ($M = 21.7$). Third, there was a clear tendency for student interest in topics to be inversely related to the frequency with which those topics were taught. Fourth, interest was significantly higher in social-issue topics than in curriculum topics (all $ps < .05$). And fifth, there was a higher preferrence for methods appropriate to the problem-solving approach over methods more appropriate to the textbook approach.

From the results it may be concluded that if sixth grade students are to understand that citizenship education is the true purpose of social studies, the curriculum must be made more relevant to their lives. They must also have part-ownership in deciding the course of that curriculum.

Teachers need to capitalize on the interests of the students and employ the motivating methods that will ensure learning, retention, and application. Students at this age are quite capable of generating social-issue topics of relevance and show an interest in dealing with them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

An eleven year old girl is consistently late for school. The teacher first encourages her to get there on time and eventually uses threats. What is unknown to the teacher is that the girl has an alcoholic mother who is rarely at home or awake in the morning when she is. The responsibility of getting her two younger siblings up, dressed, fed, and off to school falls on the girl. This situation is kept a secret by the girl as she employes a variety of excuses for her tardiness throughout the year.

The counselor visits a teacher one morning and asks that an eleven year old boy be observed for the next few days. The boy was witness to the beating of his mother by his father the previous night and is now with his grandmother for an indefinite period.

An eleven year old girl becomes despondent, her effort drops dramatically, and she is rarely at school. There are indications that the girl is being sexually abused by the mother's boyfriend, however, the family remains close-mouthed about the issue, as does the girl.

On Halloween Day, the students come dressed in costume. A girl proudly enters the room in her choice of costume.

"What are you dressed up as?" the teacher asks.

"A hooker," replies the eleven year old girl.

During a discussion generated by students on the changes in the family structure from the 1950's to the 1980's, an eleven year old boy makes this statement, "My mom died of cancer last year so I guess that now I'm the mom in our family. I have to cook and take care of my little sister and brother when they get home from school."

The teacher had been unaware of the boy's loss the preceding year and wonders if that insight would have been gained if not for the open discussion the students had initiated.

These are only a few of the cases a sixth grade teacher may encounter over the course of a schoolyear. Alcoholism and drug abuse, physical, mental and sexual abuse, divorce, death, violence, social misconceptions, and many more, are real problems being faced every day by a variety of children. Many children hide the problems that occur in their private lives yet display behaviors and aquire attitudes that signal a major problem exists not only on an individual level, but on a societal one as well. For the common thread that runs through the above mentioned problems is that they are all considered social issues by the general populace.

As a teacher, you start to think about what is being taught in school in the way of values, citizenship, and problem solving based on social issues. You ponder your own teaching, the curriculum, and class time actually spent on

these issues. You discover that not much is being done consistently to help solve or discourage societal problems. The key word is consistently in the above statement. Certainly, schools are making an effort to include programs on drug education, sexual abuse, refusal skills, citizenship, and the law, but these are generally scattered throughout the school year in the form of mini-units within particular subject areas. Something is being missed, however, when you look at a newspaper or watch the nightly news. Crime is rampant, drug use is up, and the divorce rate steadily increases each year. Something is wrong. Whether it is a values question, morals question, or natural problem of a large society is still being debated, but something needs to happen now to help students deal more effectively with the problems they encounter.

Most doctors give the advice that prevention is the best medicine. Education has the means of preventing many negative possibilities. Is it possible that given the opportunity, students could identify problems in their early lives, discuss these problems in the open forum of a classroom, and work together on solving them along with sharing thoughts, gaining advice and information, and learning about the feelings others have? Is it possible that this approach might benefit them in the future?

The question is, where does this type of approach best fit into the curriculum, program, or school day? Banks and Clegg (1977) emphatically state that, "the social studies

should assume the major responsibility for helping children become adept at making important decisions that affect their relationships with other human beings and the governing of their local communities and the nation" (p. 10).

Social studies indeed appears to be the likely candidate for the incorporation of a program that allows children to deal with problematic situations, and granted, many have the intent or give the impression of doing so. But are the problems presented in textbooks and by teachers relevant enough to the students expected to deal with them? Are they recognized as problems by the students? These two questions in themselves create a problem worthy of investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what sixth grade students considered to be social-issue problems of relevance, interest, and/or concern to them. It was a further intent of this study to determine if a social-issue, problem-solving approach would be appropriate for the sixth grade students in the district where I teach.

Background for the Study

This study's origin is based on a project that began in my social studies graduate seminar. As a group, it was our intention to reassess the evaluation methods being used for the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. Our attention

focused on the grade three and six Social Studies Achievement Test that had been piloted in 1985. Our task was to come up with alternative means to evaluate both the students and the program using methods other than this test. Through much discussion and many hours of investigation into alternatives, our focus narrowed to the problem-solving component of the social studies curriculum that dealt with social issues and competing values.

Questions began to arise as we looked at the types of social-issue problems students were expected to deal with: Were they of importance to the students? Were they of interest and concern to students? What do students consider to be social issues? Were the issues of the curriculum appropriate for the level of students expected to deal with them? Were the social-issue problems of an adult-generated nature? It was from these questions that our study evolved.

It became our task to go into schools, discover what students considered to be social-issue problems of interest and concern, and to observe how students made decisions and determined solutions for the problems they generated in their lives.

The project became one of high interest and importance to me as I reviewed the sixth grade social studies program used in my own school district in Washington State. The program utilized the expanding environments approach and involved the study of world cultures both ancient and modern. Stated in its objectives was, that the main purpose

of the program is to enable students to become responsible, decision-making citizens; however, the text did not provide many opportunities for decision-making and problem-solving to occur, much less relevant ones. The majority of questions the students were asked to deal with required a regurgitation of information provided in each chapter.

It was hoped that this study would be completed prior to the decision to adopt a new textbook for use in the sixth grade, but the decision had been made before the study began. Another "expanding environments" series with a similar approach to the other, was chosen for use. This study was still carried out to provide information for the development of a social-issue, problem-solving component for the sixth grade social studies curriculum.

The Research Questions

This study did not use a hypothesis-testing approach, but rather, investigated a series of research questions in an exploratory manner.

The questions were:

1) Why do sixth grade students feel they should learn social studies?
2) What are the interests of children in the sixth grade?
3) What are sixth graders concerned about?
4) What are some things that make sixth graders

happy and sad?

5) What do sixth graders identify as problems of concern in various categories?

6) Can sixth grade students recognize a problem situation and identify the cause?

7) What do students remember studying in social studies over the course of a school year?

8) What is the relationship between what is taught and what students are interested in?

9) What instructional methods are preferred by sixth graders?

Significance of the Study

The research reported in this thesis indicates a need for relevant problem-solving in social studies curricula. Yet, few studies were found that involve research with students to the extent that this study does. It takes a major step in allowing students active involvement in the learning process and a sharre in determining determining the possible course their curriculum may take.

The study provides information relevant to future program planning and the incorporation of student-generated ideas into such programs. It critically examines what we are now teaching and students' perceptions of the current program.

The knowledge that participating teachers gained from the study provided them with insight about their students as

well as information about methods and ideas for more effective program design.

As researcher and teacher, I am particularly interested in the results and feel they will benefit my students in the future and enhance my program as well.

Assumptions

Before embarking on the study, the following assumptions were made:

1) That social studies programs should be interest-based rather than remote. Students in this day and age come to school with a broad bank of knowledge gained from the home, environment, peers, television programs, and news media. Because of this, the standard text book approach to social studies does not address all the needs of students and their concerns about the world and its people.

2) That students will be able to generate social-issue problems. Referring again to the students' bank of knowledge, it is assumed that they will be able to generate a variety of problems and concerns relevant and worthy of discussion in their social studies programs.

3) That students are interested and concerned about social issues. Students at this age are curious, aware, and willing to get involved in areas that affect their lives directly and indirectly.

4) That there is a value in finding out if student -interest based programs are more appropriate for the sixth

grade level. To develop and improve curriculum we must consider, to a certain degree, the interests of the students who will be learning through that curriculum.

5) That students must play a more active role in their education if it is to be relevant and purposeful for them. Students need to understand the relationship of past to present and present to future; this is not accomplished unless they actively participate and develop an understanding through what they discover in the process.

6) That the methods chosen to elicit information regarding relevant social issues were appropriate for the study.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was limited somewhat by the methods used. Though a variety of methods were employed for the study, they were not the only ones that could elicit the necessary information. A decision had to be made about the number of methods used in relation to the information needed for the study. Those chosen were felt to have been appropriate and some modifications in the methods occurred during the course of the study.

All categorizations and interpretations of interviews were determined subjectively by the researcher, and must be also considered a limitation to the study.

The research tool used in Phase II of the study (a 62 item checklist) is limited in that it was not all inclusive of curriculum topics, student generated topics, nor

instructional/learning methods that could possibly have been marked. The design of the checklist is also limited in that a simple check was required of items rather than an interest rating scale.

Generalizability is also in question because only one school district in a rural area and only sixth graders were utilized for the study. However, the fact that 141 students participated in the study in part or total, would support cautious generalizability.

Time constraints placed a limit on how extensive the research could be and the number of participants used in each phase of the study.

One premise of this study was to influence the curriculum decisions within the school district. The sample used was appropriate for local generalizability and thus becomes a delimitation of the study.

Background for the Sample

The study took place in a rural school district located in Western Washington State. The district is fifteen miles northeast of the capital city of Olympia and fifteen miles southeast of Tacoma. The area would be considered low socio-economically and has a moderate transient rate. There is no major industry in the area, most workers go to the industrial area of Tacoma or work for the State in Olympia. The main employer of the town is the school district. There is a high welfare population and low income housing draws

those in need to the town. There are also middle-income families and a small segment of wealthy livestock ranchers.

The students as a whole in the district would be considered below the national norm on standardized tests though there are many ranking above this. The school district draws students from an Indian reservation, a town of approximately 1,500, and a surrounding area of about 400 square miles. The district has three elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and an alternative school. Approximately 1,800 students attend school in the district.

Definition of Terms

1) Problem-solving approach: "Problem solving" for Sagl (1966) is defined as "a searching process in which learners engage in inquiry into possible solutions to their problems and are the discoverers of the relationships among the data they gather" (p. 139).

2) Social issue: any issue that causes a problem to people in society.

3) Social Studies: the knowlege, skills, values, and activities relating to citizenship education.

4) Values: the word "values" for Raths et al. (1966) is defined as "those beliefs, purposes, and attitudes that are chosen freely, thoughtfully, and acted upon" (p. 38).

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

By the time sixth graders enter that grade, they have a personal history of eleven years. By the time sixth graders have completed that grade, they have been expected to learn the history the world has accumulated over thousands of years, deal with problems most adults have been unable to solve, and develop an understanding and acceptance of a variety of world cultures. Is it fair to require children to deal with world war issues when they cannot deal with the small scale wars that take place at home every night as they watch their families disintegrate? How valid is a textbook presentation on the wealth of America's farmland when three students have just experienced the sale of the family farm due to bank foreclosures and are now living on welfare and food stamps? How important is a lecture based on the value of treaties when four Indian students continuously sit apart from the rest of the class and refuse to participate because they have learned the "truth" outside of school?

Students are sending strong signals throughout every school day that something is wrong. In-school suspension rooms are overloaded, truancy is a chronic problem with some, counselors can only see a small percentage of the students that truly need help because there are too many. Teachers are frustrated, and many feel they have become no more than lords of discipline working with discipline

systems that don't work. More and more they are hearing these two statements: "This is boring!" and "You never listen to me!"

Banks and Clegg (1977) state that the increase in divorce, crime, and illegal use of drugs is symptomatic of an alienated and problem-ridden society. They cite research that claims, "every decade our youth are facing adult responsibilities and privileges at a younger age, and it may be that they are entering adulthood long before they are of sufficient social and psychological maturity" (p. 6).

In response to this evidence, schools and society are taking a close look at the results of this trend. Many studies and reports have come out demanding a need for change, but most advocate the "back-to-basics" approach that seems to be enacted whenever the school system gets a negative critique. So a return to textbooks and rote learning is what we get, but is more than likely not what we need.

If social studies is the proper place for students to work out a range of problems, a historical look at where it has been, where it is now, and where it is going is appropriate to this study. A focal point for this historical review will be given by the sixth graders who participated in this study.

Ninety-two students were asked to write down the reason they took social studies as a subject. 38% answered "to learn about history"; 20% "to learn about the past, present,

and future"; 9% "to learn about cultures"; 8% "because teachers make us"; 7% "because we have to"; 4% "don't know"; 3% "to get a better job"; and the remaining 12% gave various reasons ranging from "to be smart" to "to take up time in the day". Three of the students' comments are presented below.

> I think that Social Studies is the damnest subject that ever lived. Social Studies is probably just to take up 45 minutes so that our parents think that we're learning something. We do learn stuff about Greek gods and people from the past, but what are we going to use this information for in the future when we grow up? Like no one is going to ask us questions about a Greek god for a business application. Why do we have Social Studies?
>
> I don't understand why we learn Social Studies. Why do we need to learn about the past? I want to learn about now and the future.
>
> I don't take it, they choose it. It's to teach history but the book's not from your view, it's from the writers view. The teacher interprets it and then you try to understand it in your mind.

These students' remarks confirm the need for a different approach to social studies. Questions of relevance, purpose, and ownership can be heard in their comments. Why do these students feel this way and what is the cause of their dissatisfaction? A historical look at the social studies may provide some clues in answering the question.

Historical Background

The evolution of the social studies has not been without problems, its major problem possibly being that in more than one hundred years, the social studies have never been truly defined. It "is a field so caught up in ambiguity, inconsistency, and contradiction that it represents a complex educational enigma" (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977, p. 1).

To present an entire history of the field would take volumes; therefore, the following chronology based on Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977) will serve to denote decades with corresponding trends, issues, ideas, and practices.

pre-1880 Moral and patriotic values; religious emphasis.

1880-1890 History primary academic discipline; study of social relationships; American Historical Association in control; classics approach.

1890-1900 Committee of Seven recommends four "blocks" of history for high school; content of history classes is through drill, repetition, and memorization; purpose of study is to strengthen the mind and learn to function as a good citizen.

1900-1910 Few changes; many historians begin to look at a more personal, subjective, and useful

approach to history instruction and using history as a vehicle for social reconstruction; too much disagreement, however, from historians.

1910-1920 A study of the aims of teaching history reveals more than 200 different goals; historians split into three schools of thought on instruction; social scientists begin to compete with historians for influence in school curriculum; Dewey lays foundation for social studies; the term "social studies" is first formally used; Wesley, Counts, and the Ruggs become influential forces; 1916 NEA Committee on the Social Studies breaks with tradition by using non-historians and non-social scientists to determine school curriculum and seeks to define the goal of public education and the role of social studies in achieving that goal; purpose of the public schools is to be the "cultivation of good citizenship"; content of the social studies is to be the life experience of youth and the problems, conflicts, and dilemmas of their lives; suggestions of the NEA Committee failed to be properly implemented in the public schools.

1920-1930 National Council for the Social Studies is founded; Rugg urges that the goals of social education can be best accomplished through a unified social science curriculum, and he promotes the idea of early training for critical judgment of contemporary problems; American Political Science Association recommends community civics (an exact copy of the 1916 NEA proposal); 1929 Commission on the Social Studies is charged with conducting a thorough examination of public school social studies and concludes that "the goal of the social studies is to help develop all students into rich, many-sided personalities, equipped with practical knowledge and inspired by ideals so they can make their way and fulfill their mission in a changing society which is part of a world complex."

1930-1940 Cultural transmission is joined to the idea of social reconstruction; "new" content of history recommended by 1929 committee to make history more practical, usable, and relevant to daily lives of students; recommendations made for integration of history and the social sciences; The Progressive Education Association is

founded; "expanding horizons" idea emerges in an effort to go from the concrete to the abstract; recommendations of the commission have little impact on the public school curriculum.

1940-1950 Social studies subject to attack from every side; WWII and Korean Conflict impact goals of social studies; public demand leads to greater emphasis on the study of history; American governmental institutions and analysis of American Constitution stressed; re-emphasis on separate subjects, rote memorization of factual information, and selected cultural values.

1950-1960 Hunt and Metcalf conceive new way of integrating social science with the goal of citizenship education and make careful distinction between social science and social studies; back-to-basics movement in effect; reports show lack of historical knowledge in students; major national and world events cause "reform" in the area of social studies.

1960-1970 Social studies found ineffective and its goals outdated; movement from social studies to social science education; Bruner most

influential in the "new" social studies movement; fundamental structure of a discipline stressed; each discipline is approached as different and distinct; curriculum task forces are formed; 50 projects are funded to develop curriculum materials; National Science Foundation gets involved; concepts and processes in social studies are stressed; Social Science Education Consortium is formed; methods of inquiry are added as an important component to programs; idea of interdisciplinary structure for social studies begins to emerge; reports still show that in the schools, social studies still remains largely unchanged.

1970-1980 Acknowledgement of interrelationship between history and social science; values education accepted as important; inquiry process, decision- making, student-oriented problems emphasized: national turmoil and reports of testing results begin to destroy the "new" social studies; back-to-basics called for; citizen education revived by NCSS.

In concluding their survey of the history of the field, Barr, Barth, and Shermis state:

> There will be no final agreement regarding what the social studies should be. A hundred years of competition and efforts at compromise only serve to demonstrate that the underlying disagreements are too basic, and the vast interests of the competing groups too pronounced to permit general agreement. (1977, p. 52)

This historical perspective adopted from Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977) affirms their earlier statement which refers to the social studies as an enigma. It shows the development, evolution, and revolution the social studies have gone through over the decades and brings us up to the decade of the eighties.

If the developments of the eighties have brought us to "where we are now", then where are we? Most would say we are operating in the back-to-basics mode, as is confirmed by Project SPAN's report, The Current State of Social Studies (1982). Morrissett (1984) sums up the findings by saying that citizenship education is still the single most common goal for social studies, that the dominant pattern of expanding environments for K-6 and history, civics, and government for 7-12, has persisted due to strength of tradition, reinforcement of the pattern by textbooks, and the lack of a compelling alternative, and that the educational community and public accept and rely on curriculum materials as essential aids to teaching,

learning, and classroom management with the textbook being the foremost of the curriculum materials.

Textbooks come up quite often in Morrissett's analysis of the report and when one thinks about it, the economics of it all come into focus. It would appear that the publishing companies have had a heyday and are quite possibly the only group to benefit totally from the evolution of the social studies. Whenever the trends shifted, they were surely there to make a profit on the latest bandwagon approach.

Ponder, Brandt, and Ebersole (1979) confirm this textbook dominance in their summation of the NSF Report which indicates that at all levels, the social studies curriculum is a textbook curriculum. They state that the textbook is used by teachers in their courses and the content of the courses is encountered by the students through the pages of the textbook. This approach has contributed to a weakening of problem-solving and analysis as far as being concerns of social studies education.

Two other points brought out by the above researchers are that students view social studies as often interesting but as a relatively unimportant area of the curriculum, and that many teachers who have tried a problem solving approach have abandoned it and returned to the textbook. Morrissett (1984) agrees with this in his statement, "Most of the time students and teachers spend in the classroom is focused on the use of curriculum materials" (p. 512), and as previously stated, the textbook is the primary curriculum aid utilized.

It is no wonder that the sixth grade students quoted at the beginning of this historical review said what they did. If this is where we are, then where do we go from here?

Morrissett (1984) presents us with four views of the future of social studies. They are summed up in point form below.

1) The Inertia Of The Past Will Prevail-Perhaps his grimmest view, that the pattern of the past will continue and that social studies education will be at the same point five, ten, or even twenty years from now.

2) Education Will Move Slowly But Surely-And Maybe Not So Slowly-Toward Agreed-Upon Ideal States-A much more positive view, where it is recommended that students take a more active involvement in their education by doing more and listening less, a call for a decrease in rote learning and an increase in problem-solving facility in order to prepare students for their future. This approach is based on the assumption that we know what the problems are, we know what is best for students, and that we have the means to start getting there. We are however, bogged down with being reluctant to change or considering it all "pie in the sky" and not trying hard enough.

3) The New Social Studies Is Not Dead, But Only Sleeping-This view suggests the possibility that all the innovative teaching methods and learning materials of the 1960's and 1970's is stored away ready to be brought out

during more favorable circumstances and to be rediscovered, revised, and put into practice.

4) A Revolution Requires A Strong Catalyst; Computers May Be It-This final view proposes that through using computers, new types of learning can be experienced, paperwork cut down, and individual needs met. He claims that the possibilities are limitless if computers are used to full capacity.

Though his views may be questionable in part or in whole, he does bring out some excellent points that prevail throughout most of the literature that make recommendations for social studies. More student involvement, issues of relevancy, and breaking the bonds of the textbooks are all future concerns for the betterment of social studies.

The NCSS has determined the ultimate goal of social studies to be citizenship education. According to the Committee, four considerations must be taken into account to achieve this goal: 1) The development of desirable socio-civic and personal behavior. 2) The behavior grows out of the values, ideals, beliefs, and attitudes which people hold. 3) These characteristics must be rooted in knowledge. 4) For the development of knowledge, people require appropriate ability and skills (p. 316). Another highly stressed consideration of the NCSS is that each learner is a unique individual and the school must take not only this into account, but also recognize what behaviors can be expected at each level.

Engle (1960) states, "If the quality of decision-making is to be the primary concern of social studies instruction...we must not only provide the opportunity for decision-making but we must see to it that decisions are made in keeping with well known rules of science and logic and that students get practice in making-decisions" (p. 15).

Opportunity and practice appear to be the two key words in the above statement which lead to this question, are educators giving students opportunity and practice in the area of decision making?

Mitsakos (1981) offers the following guidelines, which appear in the Revision of the NCSS Social Studies Curriculum Guidelines, for social studies in the eighties:

1) Social studies programs for the 1980's should be directly related to age, maturity, and concerns of students.

2) Social studies programs for the 1980's should deal with the real social world.

3) Social studies programs for the 1980's should draw from curriculum valid knowledge representative of human experience, culture, and beliefs.

4) Objectives for social studies programs of the 1980's should be carefully selected and clearly stated in such a form as to furnish direction to the program.

5) Learning activities of social studies programs for the 1980's should engage students directly and actively in the learning process.

6) Strategies of instruction and learning activities of social studies programs for the 1980's should rely on a broad range of learning resources.

7) Social studies programs for the 1980's must facilitate the organization of experience.

8) Evaluation of social studies programs for the 1980's should be useful, systematic, comprehensive, and valid for the objectives of the program.

9) Social studies education for the 1980's should receive vigorous support as a vital and responsible part of the school program. (pp. 19-20)

Points previously brought out in this review are reiterated in these guidelines; a need for change, improvement, and a renewed approach to social studies as well as a call for reality, recognition of individual differences, and relevance to students.

The first point that Mitsakos makes states that social studies programs should be directly related to the age, maturity, and concerns of the students within them. How does one go about determining the information to meet these guidelines?

The preceding question brings us to the point of the research to follow in this thesis, for it became a search to discover the answer to this very question.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Need for Social-Issue, Problem-Solving Programs

Because of the nature of social studies and its central concern to help students develop their attitudes toward self, others, their own society, and other cultures, it seems to be a subject that calls for more student involvement in the planning and carrying out of a program. A review of the literature not only shows that this is possible, but indicates the importance of student involvement for the success of such a program.

Social issue classes go far beyond the standard "current events" components of many social studies curricula. To be effective, issues must be interest-based, problem solving must occur, and individual values cannot be ignored. The literature found in relation to this study supports all of these factors and confirms the need for a study of this nature.

Dewey (1916) and Bruner (1963), two early proponents of the problem-solving approach, had this to say:

> The giving of problems, the putting of questions, the assignment of tasks, the magnifying of difficulties, is a large part of school work. But it is indispensable to discriminate between genuine or simulated mock problems. The following questions may aid in making such discriminations. (a) Is there anything but a problem? Does the question naturally suggest itself within

> some situation or personal experience? Or is it an aloof thing, a problem only for the purposes of conveying instruction in some school topic? Is it the sort of trying that would arouse observation and engage experimentation outside of school? and (b) Is it the pupils own problem, or is it the teacher's or textbook's problem, made a problem for the pupil only because he cannot get the required mark or be promoted or win the teacher's approval, unless he deals with it? Obviously, these two questions overlap. They are two ways of getting at the same point: Is the experience a personal thing of such a nature as inherently to stimulate and direct observation of the connections involved, and to lead to inference and its testing? Or is it imposed without, and is the pupil's problem simply to meet the external requirement?
> (Dewey, 1916, p. 154-155)

> It is evident that if children are to learn the working techniques of discovery, they must be afforded the opportunities of problem solving. The more they practice problem solving, the more likely they are to generalize what they learn in a style of inquiry that serves for any kind of task they may encounter. It is doubtful that anyone ever improves in the art and technique of inquiry by any other means than engaging in problem solving. (Bruner, 1963, p. 27)

Within these two statements are found considerations for using the problem-solving approach and the necessity for children to have both the opportunity and practice required to become effective problem solvers. Shaver (1977) argues that we need to employ the Deweyan rationale for effective social studies education. This would involve a more child-centered approach that is based on reflective thinking and would deal with problems from the students' direct

experience. He states that, "This would help students learn to function fully in democratic society, including learning to participate intelligently in ethical decision making" (p. 350). The following sections will address these concepts of problem solving in greater detail.

The Role of the Teacher

The problem-solving approach is not a method of instruction that the teacher can determine alone or without assessment of student needs. The concept of what constitutes a problem is the most important consideration. Young (1970) states, "The all important first step in problem solving is recognizing that a problem exists. If children do not see or understand that there is a problem, they do not seek a solution. Once children become aware of a problem, they must feel that they can take action to solve it. If they think they cannot do anything about it, it does them no good to see a situation as a problem" (p. 66). This becomes a major factor when teachers plan problem-solving activities for students. What may be a meaningful problem in the eyes of a teacher may not be in the students' eyes. Many adult-generated problems turn out to be meaningless, teacher-pleasing exercises to the students. Allowing the students to generate problems that are of high interest and value to them would appear to be the vital link in any problem-solving approach.

Teachers in tune with their students generally recognize the value of capitalizing on the problems that naturally occur in the classroom. Many of these daily problems can be easily incorporated into existing curricula to add meaning or gain a better understanding of the problems students deal with in prescribed lessons. Stratemeyer (1957) took this idea and developed the "social living or interactive approach", in which naturally occurring problems are used as a major focus. The teacher encourages the students to study their diverse problems or questions and takes a less directive role than in other approaches. The teacher helps the students to identify problems but not to select themes or areas to be studied, the latter is done by the students. The studies then permeate the entire day and become fused with the problems of living in the classroom, virtually impossible to separate from the rest of the curriculum. This might appear to be a radical approach for many teachers (allowing the students to determine the direction of much of the curriculum), and in any program of this nature, the teacher is indeed the key element if it is to work.

Other studies support the importance of the role of the teacher in the success of a problem-solving approach. Simon (1970) stresses the need for a climate of open inquiry in the classroom to enable students to engage in effective problem-solving activities. This atmosphere creates an openess in which the teacher can guide the students and together they can determine the appropriateness of problems

to be discussed. Teachers must feel they can create an atmosphere of this nature to effectively implement a program involving open inquiry. According to Massialas, Sprague, and Hurst (1975), the teacher must maintain focus without monopolizing the discussion or stifling reflection on the part of the students. Teachers must feel comfortable in giving students this much "control", in order for problem-solving activities have meaning and purpose for the students involved. A study by Sugre (1970) indicated that students who believed strongly in student participation in class discussions and who believed that students had a right to express their opinions in class liked their social issues classes and frequently felt that their teacher was one of the best. It was also determined that discussions of social issues should be integrated into ongoing learning in the classroom and that students be made aware of the purposes of the discussions.

An integral part of social-issue problem solving is valuing. In this more specific area the role of the teacher is critical for the success of classroom discussions. Silver (1976) tells us that "classroom effectiveness seems directly related to the teacher's ability to respect student ideas and accept student value positions" (p. 27). He continues by saying that teachers should participate in values discussion but they must also be careful when offering alternatives, making sure students accept these only as opinions. It is also cautioned that teachers should

allow students to investigate and discuss questions concerning values and make decisions about them without undue influence.

Teacher behavior and attitude are truly important factors in creating an atmosphere condusive to effective problem solving activities. According to Hunt and Metcalf (1955), if a teacher can create in students a feeling that their beliefs, concepts, and values are inadequate and can cause students to become puzzled over what to believe, they are more likely to have an authentic problem in their possession.

Creating an environment in which children are encouraged to question, explore, discover, and learn techniques and procedures for problem solving is an all-important factor. To ensure this environment, Shaftel and Crabtree (1963) offer the following guidelines for teachers:

1) Always respond to children's questions.
2) Some questions deserve group attention, others individual attention.
3) Encourage children to challenge each others ideas.
4) Help the children recognize that a search involves trial and error.
5) Emphasize the search alongside more routine learnings.
6) Reward exploratory thinking.

7) Make children understand the importance of delaying action in order to think the problem through.
8) Develop an understanding that all problems are not immediately solvable but progress is made by working on them.
9) Make it safe to have ideas to try or abandon.
10) Help children realize that a hypothesis can be false as well as true.
11) Wait for children to think.
12) Demonstrate your faith in problem-solving thinking by participating in it yourself.
13) Ask yourself continuously, "Does the curriculum I plan permit the emergence of problems that are real for the children?" (pp.294-301).

Considerations for the Student

Two important studies occurred in the seventies that have bearing on this study. With the idea that social reasoning in decision-making involve attitudes and ideas in dealing with a problem, Damon (1979) found through interviewing, that at different points in their lives, children tend to bring to a dilemma different ideas about the world and their place in it. As children progress to higher stages of social reasoning, their thinking becomes more thorough, complex, and useful to them. He also found that children moved to these higher stages of social

reasoning when they were allowed to interact with each other in considering social problems real to them - those they face in their real experience (as opposed to problems adults think important). There are two notable points brought up in Damon's findings. The first is the notion of the child's place in the world. So many times educators forget that the children may have a completely different and limited view of the world. When we pose to them problems not of their world, we increase the possibility of their not having success in dealing with them. If problems can be designed that specifically address their world and relation to it, we create not only a meaningful learning experience but an involvement of the student in the process, a more active learner. The second point of note in Damon's study is the interaction process necessary for problem solving to occur, particularly when dealing with social issues. This process enables the students to gain more from others, express their opinions, and discover in a meaningful way through their interaction with a group. Many covert skills are developed through this process as well.

In a similar study, Selman (1980) observed that young children cannot see a social situation from any point of view but their own. Gradually, they learn to perceive situations from the standpoint of others; finally they learn to look objectively at such situations from a third-person point of view. Selman calls this empathizing "social perspective taking", and researched its stages. He too

found that posing "real-life" situations of interest to children, with proper teacher guidance, enabled children to move through the stages and develop an understanding of the complexities of problems. Once again, the key appears to be the nature of the problem and its relevance to students. Selman used a variety of methods to gain his information, and they also confirm the value of using student-generated problems in a problem-solving approach.

The research presented in this review brings out many points in favor of a child-oriented approach to problem solving. As was stated earlier, values are an integral part of any problem-solving approach. Raths (1966) concluded that children who have missed out in the development of values exhibit behaviors that may include apathy, over-conformity, extreme uncertainty, under achievement, and inconsistency.

In a more recent study dealing with value concepts, Schuncke and Krough (1982) interviewed elementary children of all grades on their understanding of seven basic value concepts and the importance of those concepts to their lives. They concluded from their findings that any activity involving value conflict must be one that is real to the children in order to be effective, and that one value must not be so much stronger than the other as to preclude, from the child's point of view, consideration of the other value. It would appear then, that teachers would have to involve their students in the planning of any value conflict

activity in order to determine the importance of the various values concepts for that particular group.

In another article by Schuncke (1981) dealing with values in the classroom, he discusses the two conventional ways educators have approached the issue of teaching valuing. These are values clarification and moral reasoning. He addresses the inappropriateness of the materials for most elementary classrooms in that they frequently assume a sophistication that the children may not possess. They also require a level of cognitive development that students in elementary school have not yet attained and require communication skills that young children do not possess. Schuncke advocates drawing problems from the world of childhood, with guidance from the teacher, and activities such as role playing to increase children's awareness and development of valuing and problem solving.

Sagl (1966) adds that there is little evidence that children always solve problems according to structured problem solving criteria. There is also evidence that the act of problem solving may not occur as a sequential process.

Entwistle (1970), a proponent of child-centered learning, states, "Clearly, adult learning often begins with urgent practical problems as the situation develops" (p. 147). A limited encounter may spark an interest, and stimulation in that interest may develop into challenges worth mastering from that initial encounter caused by an

urgent problem. He continues by saying that many of the problems we encounter as adults emerge as "real", but others are not so spontaneously encountered. Some problems adults are faced with solving are posed or caused by others. Adults choose how and when they will learn, against this, "from the child's point of view, schools are created by adults, attendance is compulsory and all the things which follow from the institutionalization of learning must occur irrespective of his own inclinations" (p. 147).

If most adult learning goes from a problem to more structured learning, why must child learning go from structure to determining problems within the structure? It would appear that children's motivation toward learning might be increased if their studies could be developed from the problems they encounter in real life.

Jersild (1949) points out that it is necessary to go beyond the study of children's expressed interests in order to get clues to what the educational program should include. Entwistle (1970) takes this assumption and puts it into perspective along with other factors by saying, if we look at problems that might be posed in the classroom on a spectrum, at one extreme would be the child's spontaneously encountered problems and at the other those posed by the teacher or textbook with assumed outcomes, there must lie between the two extremes a considerable range of possibilities in which teachers and students formulate problems in a cooperative manner.

Entwistle sums up his thoughts on the child-centered approach to problem solving by saying that the educational importance of problem solving derives, in part, from the recognition that ultimately one can only learn to do anything by doing it. Unless the learners practice, there is no guarantee that they will understand what is required in performing a skill. It is this essential role of practice in the mastery of different kinds of skills which largely justifies the assumption that all learning is self-learning and that no one can really teach anyone else. In the end, the teacher must hand over the initiative to the student.

The evidence presented thus far calls for a reassessment of current social studies programs and the implementation of programs that are more reality-based for students. It is appropriate to conclude this section with the following exerpt from Children Under Pressure, by Doll and Fleming (1966).

> Many young people tend to feel that they are unknown in school; that no one cares; that grades, tests, and competition are strong sources of anxiety; that excessive homework is a burden; that teaching is unrelated to life and to today's problems; that the schedule is too rigid and too full; that everyone is in a hurry; and that parents have no understanding of school. All of these and many more indictments are made. How can school be humanized, and how can teaching and learning become more exciting?
> Much is known about teaching. Many of the problems of our children and youth could be alleviated or avoided if the

> best we know about people and their growth, learning and motivation, democracy and responsibility, communication and materials, and values and human relations could be applied. Much of the "breakthrough" we so desire could be achieved by the careful inauguration in every school and classroom of teaching which is life-connected and value-oriented (pp. 91-92).

Curriculum Considerations and Implications

This section will present a variety of views centered around the curricular aspects of more reality-based social studies education. Both theoretical views and practical applications are included in the discussion.

Entwistle (1970), poses the following questions for consideration when using this approach. They are as follows:

1) Who defines the curriculum and its relationship with the life of the learner?
2) How do you justify the teacher's authority and the very act of teaching itself?
3) How far should education at any age be learner-centered?
4) How far should the child's present interests and needs determine curriculum?
5) How far are the childrens' interests served by encouraging preoccupation with their personal interests and problems; with life as they see it?

6) In what sense, if any, can preparation for the future be reconciled with the requirement that schooling should have meaning for the child as and when it happens?

7) Does the idea of the autonomy of the children's interests give an adequate account of what their present life might be or of what they are capable of becoming? (pp. 14-19).

These questions are raised by both Enwistle and the critics of child-centered learning. They are all worthy of consideration when developing a reality-based or child-centered approach to problem solving.

Engle and Longstreet (1972) point out that in an open curriculum, two diverse forms of reality are being dealt with; the first being what is relevant to the individual and the second, what is relevant to society. Individuals are represented by their questions and concerns, while society is represented by the teaching of disciplines. They see an alternative lying between organizing the curriculum in response to the questions and problems that arise naturally from the life of the student and around a few of the disciplines thought to be of most social significance.

They specifically address the social studies as an area orginally designed to escape the limits of the disciplines yet cite the fact that the social studies have been made so impersonal that they have become unreal for students. Problems and needs of young people are treated as incidental

concerns, with stress placed on the abstract knowing associated with the disciplines. Their suggestion for curriculum is to use a topical approach with social studies as it better meets the needs of relevancy for the individual, rather that using the standard discipline-base as it is relevant from the standpoint of society. They feel that an intellectual structuring of topics would ensure their systematic study and provide sequence for the development of knowledge.

Tyler (1949) considered programs within a curriculum and stated that not enough emphasis was placed on the interests of the students. Though he does not believe a program should be based solely on these interests, he feels that if schools deal with more matters of interest to the learners, they will participate more actively in them and learn to deal with them effectively.

Tyler contends that if students' interests are recognized as a viable component of program development, two things can be accomplished: "(1) that when interests are desirable ones, they provide a starting point for effective instruction, and (2) if interests are undesirable, narrow, limited, or inadequate, they indicate gaps which need to be overcome if the student is to receive an effective education" (p. 11).

Seif (1977) brings out three points for consideration when developing reality-oriented curriculum. First, reality-oriented instruction must focus on content that is

concrete rather than abstract, and deal with specific people at specific times and places. Most of this type of content would be presented in story form with a purpose of exploring an individual's emotions, problems, interactions, and life style. Secondly, reality-oriented teaching should not cover topics in an "antiseptic" way but should contain the realities of life, varied ideas, and people. A multiplicity of ideas should be presented giving insight to life and its promises and problems. The third intent is to have content become more present- and future-oriented. The reasoning behind this is that the further removed content is from the lives of the children, the more difficult it is to relate what they are studying to themselves. By considering this method of instruction/learning, content becomes more significant by becoming more reality oriented.

Seif developed a set of goals that social studies curriculum could be built upon. They are as follows:

1) To help children understand more about people, their relationships to each other and their relationships to their environment.
2) To foster the development of human dignity and a respect for human life.
3) To provide knowledge and skills necessary for the survival of individuals, groups, democratic ideas, and life itself.

4) To help children make choices about important economic, political, and social issues of the times.

5) To help children lead more satisfying, richer and more personally fulfilling lives (p. 46).

Taba, Durkin, Fraenkel, and McNaughten (1971) make this brief yet conclusive statement about social studies curriculum: "If curriculum is to be an effective vehicle for learning and development in today's world, it must simultaneously build a more sophisticated understanding of the world, help individuals to 'know' themselves, use the most durable knowledge available so as to deal effectively with an expanded range of knowledge, be applicable to students with a wide range of abilities, and provide for both cognitive and affective development" (p. 5).

The preceeding statement, calls for the development of a new curriculum pattern. Taba et al. view curriculum as a number of interrelated elements worthy of a pattern of design and feel that traditional curriculum guides have failed to include all elements necessary for proper design.

Gross, Messick, Chapin, and Sutherland (1978) have developed a list of twenty goals to be used as guidelines for developing a social studies curriculum. Within the twenty goals, emphasis is placed on meeting the total needs of the student, providing experiences for better understanding of society, the incorporation of values, attention to current societal problems, and active problem

resolution. Interrelationships are also stressed in the areas of subjects and curricula, as well as human relationships in the family, school, and community. They suggest an ongoing evaluation process based on behavior, understanding, competencies, values, and attitudes. The goals developed by this research group are based on what they feel the two major goals of social studies should be: to prepare students to be citizens in a democratic society and to make them rational decision-makers concerning civic and social issues.

Hanna, Potter, and Reynolds (1973) provide a list of assumptions about learning that deserve crucial consideration when planning programs within a curriculum. They state that that learning is most effective

1) when children are engaged in problem-solving activities that are of real interest and concern to them.
2) when children are engaged in the learning situation and are stimulated not only intellectually but emotionally as well.
3) when learning is related to the life experiences of the child.
4) when children see the relationship between one experience and the larger whole.
5) when children perceive personal meaning in what is learned.

According to Hanna et al., all of these learning assumptions should be worked into programs to enable students to have success in working through problems, making decisions, examining values, achieving self-esteem, and more. They go on to say that teachers can develop more goal-satisfying programs by incorporating these assumptions that help students relate to life experiences and gain personal meaning from curriculum.

Casteel (1978) also offers a list of assumptions for consideration in planning a curriculum. Though his assumptions are in regard to dealing with issues that involve values clarification, they apply to the problem-solving setting as well. His assumptions are not to convince but serve to forewarn instructors using this type of approach in the classroom. They are:

1) Decision-making is tied to understanding. If an issue or a situation is comprehended poorly, the decisions are unlikely to be wise no matter how adequately valuing skills are applied.
2) Instructional materials are not intended to teach. The teacher provides directions that help students perceive purpose in what they are doing, monitors student behavior and maintains a learning climate, organizes the students into learning groups, and provides feedback on student performance.
3) To function most effectively, instructional materials must be made relevant to two worlds of

experience. The child lives in a world of experience in which certain events and situations appear important to him. Instructional materials designed for the middle-grade pupils should focus on this world and draw on the student's interests. At the same time, there are societal events and situations that may be referred to as the adult's world of experience. The intention should be to present significant adult concerns in terms of situations that belong to the child's world of experience.

4) Decision-making and the study of organized bodies of knowledge, such as science, history, or literature, may be and ought to be coordinated. What one learns in science may be made applicable to such topics as the quality of our environment or the energy crisis by placing students in decision-making situations in which they have the opportunity to display and use their knowledge and understanding. Using such knowledge in decision-making episodes that are made relevant to the student's world of experience provides these students with an opportunity to perceive that such knowledge and understanding have personal and social utility.

5) The classroom teacher should not hesitate to create and maintain structures that are likely to

eventuate in desired student learnings. It is sometimes argued that if teachers talked less and students talked more, students would learn more and have more interest in school. It is also asserted that if a teachers can ask good questions, then they are likely to experience teaching success. Neither of these contentions is valid. While teachers may structure so frequently as to inhibit or bar student behavior, they are responsible for creating learning conditions, including constraints, within which it is believed students will learn. While teachers frequently employ questions to solicit desired student behaviors, they do so within a structured learning situation.

6) Values and valuing skills are learned, maintained, and rejected or modified in groups. Initial reactions to situations become an aspect of a valuing exercise and are subjected to the scrutiny, criticism, and use of the group (pp. 6-9).

The intent of this review is to affirm the need for more student participation in determining the direction of social studies curricula and the planning of more student-interest based programs, not to present a variety of models for use in problem-solving approaches. It is important to note however, that Parsons and Shaftel (1967) warn teachers of potential dangers in structured models. They have separated models for problem solving into two main

groups, categorical and stategic. The major concern with the categorical models (those which separate the results of inquiry into categories and subcategories) is that they promote convergent rather than divergent thinking. Strategic models (those which present inquiry in a series of sequential steps) may stifle divergent and convergent thinking. The mode of inquiry suggested is one that allows children to follow their curiosity and encourages them to seek answers to their questions. It should also include a discovery of relations among data gathered and meaning in the relations which they can then verbalize as a generalization from their own research. To accomplish this, a model must take into consideration the element of freedom children need to search, organize, and theorize in order to develop creativity, autonomy, and divergent thinking.

The child-centered, reality-oriented approach to teaching is not without its critics. Those who oppose programs of this nature point out many reasons for their beliefs, these include: that a pre-occupation of children's values as opposed to those of mature, responsible adults is inappropriate; that it is education without instruction employing no knowledge that is precise and firm; that students lose the ability to do work with any thoroughness; that it de-emphasizes the three "R's", it detracts from teaching the essentials; that it is too easy and entertaining; and that there is an abdication of the teacher's power.

Other critics point out a danger in not taking sufficient thought about the curriculum; that there is a limited conception of what a child is capable of learning; and finally, that too much freedom in education will dispose the child toward and egocentric view of the world.

Entwistle (1970) argues against these criticisms with this single statement, "That the child cannot see the educational potential of his own experience is essentially the standpoint of those educationalists who have questioned the desirability of the child-centered curriculum" (p. 148).

The criticisms of this approach are not unfounded, but the positive aspects cannot be ignored. Through the child-centered approach to problem-solving, discipline can become more non-repressive, teachers are more approachable, education is looked at from the learner's point of view, children are active participants in their education and considered more valuable human beings. In sum, the children truly become the ultimate agents of their own education.

If there is a common thread that runs through the previous review of curriculum approaches, it is the need to consider more the interests of the students we teach in order to develop more effective programs within our curriculum. The curriculum must also be made more real to the students if we expect them to grasp concepts and digest content.

Travers (1978) makes this comment regarding the consideration of children's interests: "Attempts are still being made to make school work more interesting, rather than finding work for the children that is inherently interesting to them. The school is more likely to be a killer of interest than the developer" (p. 128).

The theories are abundant on how to resolve this dilemma Travers expresses. Many educators have developed curriculum guides and programs to alleviate this situation. We can be bogged down as the cycle of the history of social studies continues to turn, going nowhere but back to its starting point and repeating itself again and again, or we can start initiating the programs that we think are right for children. It is promising to see that the 1979 NCSS Guidelines concur with the presented research, the focus now should be putting the theories into practice.
The following comment from Gilbert (1985) provides the concluding thoughts for this chapter.

> Social education must then be critical in two ways. In seeking to improve the human welfare through the power of knowledge, it will look critically at the society it studies to identify its strengths and weaknesses, achievements and failures. But it must also be critical of its own attempts to explain society to students in a way that will, again in the words of NCSS, "impel them to apply their knowledge, abilities, and commitments toward the improvement of the human condition (p. 383).

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

Methodological Background

In the mid-century, Jersild and Tasch (1949) surveyed the wishes, interests, likes and dislikes of children. The study was also one of the first to involve a large group of teachers, supervisors, and university staff in a major cooperative effort.

Jersild and Tasch sought to discover what the interests of children suggested for education. They concluded that interests should not be looked upon primarily as guides to teaching or learning but as forms of experience through which the child discovers and realizes the resources of his nature.

One of Jersild and Tasch's findings was that social studies was the least liked subject by the majority of students who participated in the study. Herman (1963) replicated that portion of the study, by using a multiple-choice interest inventory, to determine if the same results would occur. His results concurred with Jersild and Tasch's: social studies was once again rated low or the very lowest on the scale of preferred subjects.

A report by Schug, Todd, and Beery (1984) again showed social studies ranking low with science as a close contender. They interviewed children on why they disliked social studies and found the most common response to be

boredom. Other responses involved content and teaching methods. They stated that most students found social studies to be uninteresting because the information was too far removed from their own experience, too detailed for clear understanding, or it repeated information learned earlier. They also mentioned the lack of variety in teaching methods.

The three studies briefly described above employed surveys, questionnaires, and paper, pencil activities, and interviews. Interviews are commonly used to elicit more detailed information. Rothe and Tod (1980) encourage the method of informal interviewing when more specifics are required. It is a way to discover, through conversation and observation, more of the "whys" than a survey or written questionnaire can provide.

Tyler (1949) recognized the value of interviewing children decades ago. He perceived the interview as a means of getting more informal data about how students feel about things, their interests, attitudes, and philosophies of life.

Methods used in the studies by Jersild and Tasch, Herman, and Schug, Tod, and Berry, and the information on interviewing were carefully considered for use in this study. Ideas were taken from each and modified to suit the needs of the study. Other methods employed were tested for appropriateness in a pilot study which produced the results that follow.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted using 14 sixth grade students. This provided an opportunity to test methods and to determine if the project was worthwhile. The intent of the pilot study was to gain information and insight with as little adult influence as possible. This was most successful during periods of unobtrusive observation and during individual interviews. Some direction was required during group activities, and slipping back into a teacher role was unavoidable at times.

The project did reveal that the students had concerns, handled problems they found themselves in, and were aware of things going on in the world. Many expressed a feeling of concern but stated they didn't know what to do about certain world situations. Most problems elicited from them were of a personal nature, and it was clearly evident that they had more interests than concerns in their daily lives. The students revealed quite a bit about themselves, what they thought about, and through observation, were quite honest in most cases.

Some of the methods elicited more information than others and the most successful were the ones involving individual activities or those with partners. Small, student-led groups were not as successful. This can be explained by lack of direction (as it was the intent not to give much direction), and the fact that some of the students in the groups had no interest in the problem posed for

discussion. It was also discovered that the make-up of the groups (boys and girls, love-hate relationships, etc.) had a major bearing on proceedings. Some small groups worked well together, others did not. Because of the short amount of time with these students, it proved difficult to implement some of the procedures as designed, but appropriateness of the methods was able to be determined.

As a result of the pilot study, methods became refined and the ones chosen for use in this study were those that seemed most appropriate for obtaining the necessary information. The pilot study also proved a worthwhile endeavor in that much insight was gained about how sixth graders perceive the world and their place in it. In addition, it indicated to me that a study of this nature would be of great benefit in my own school district from a pedagogic perspective.

Methodology for the Study

This study was divided into two major phases, each having a number of sub-phases. Six, sixth-grade classes from a single middle school located in a rural district were used for the study. Some classes participated in the majority of activities developed for the study, whereas three of the classes participated only in the second phase. A total of 141 students participated in the study. The study took place during the month of May in 1986.

Phase I-A

The initial activity for the study was designed to set the stage for more complex tasks to follow. The design for it came from the book Questions Kids Ask for Those Who Care to Listen, by D. B. Spencer. The students were asked to write down questions they felt were worth answering. The activity was done anonymously and students were encouraged to be as open and honest as they chose to be.

Purpose: To initiate the study, create an atmosphere of openness and honesty, and to gain insight into the thoughts of sixth grade students.

Phase I-A had 60 student participants. Questions were placed into categories by the researcher and are presented verbatim in Chapter V of the study.

Phase I-B

The second activity involved a picture drawing task. Students were asked to draw a picture of a situation including them that made them feel happy and another that made them feel sad or bothered. They were also asked to write the reason for the feeling on the back of each drawing.

Purpose: To identify situations that caused a feeling and to be able to identify a reason for that emotion.

Phase I-B had 53 student participants. Drawings were categorized by content and reason. Percentages of drawings in each category are presented in table form in Chapter V of the study.

Phase I-C

During the third segment of Phase I, students chose a partner to work on a listing task. The activity was designed to determine if students could generate or identify problems they were concerned about in seven areas. The areas included: neighborhood, community, society, and the world, as well as problems in school, with peers, and those of concern to parents (in the opinion of the students).

Purpose: To determine what types of problems in specific areas students of the sixth grade were aware of and/or concerned about. To determine if commonalities would begin to arise in the first three activities.

Phase I-C had 64 student participants divided into 32 pairs. The number of times specific problems were identified were tallied for each category. Results are presented in table form in Chapter V of the study.

Phase I-D

Part four of Phase I utilized the SRA Study Prints. A variety of problems were presented pictorially on large poster-like cards to the class. For example, of one of the

cards depicts a boy standing next to a rack of cigarettes apparently in some type of store. He has a look on his face that would indicate that he is pondering something. His hand is on the rack of cigarettes.

Students chose partners and a print to work with. Their task was to answer questions dealing with the picture shown on the print. The questions included problem identification, cause, solution, and relationship to the student. Students were asked to do as many as they could in the time allowed (40 minutes).

Purpose: To determine if students could recognize an existing or potential problem, decide how a problem occurred, discuss it with a peer, come up with one or more solutions for it, and recall if they had been in a similar situation and, if so, how they solved or handled the problem.

Phase I-D had 26 student participants divided into 13 pairs. Responses to the questions asked of each study print are presented verbatim in Chapter V of the study.

Phase I-E

The final portion of Phase I involved the interviewing of nineteen students, ten boys and nine girls. The interviewees represented a variety of ability levels as perceived by their teachers. During the interviews, students were asked various questions dealing with their

interests, concerns, and thoughts about their social studies programs. Nine of these students (who had been ability rated by their teachers) were given more extensive interview questions that dealt with ideas for improving social studies programs, observations of other students during classtime, and their choice of a theoretical social studies program they felt would work best for them. The interviews afforded an opportunity to discover more about students' thoughts and provided a one-to-one listening and hearing-out time for the students (a time not often available to them in school).

Purpose: To gain further insights about interests and concerns through talking to students. To discover more of the "whys" than the paper and pencil activities could elicit. To verify in a more observable way, commonalities that were emerging from the activities.

The 19 interviews were transcribed in total. Students' interests and concerns were listed separately, then written up in a descriptive manner with analysis by the researcher. Students' thoughts and ideas concerning their social studies program were dealt with in the same fashion. The more specific information from the nine special interviews was transcribed directly from the tapes and a written analysis was done for each question category. Interviews which included conversations about specific social issues brought up by the students were chosen for

inclusion in the study. All information collected from this process is reported in Chapter V of the study.

Phase II

The rationale for the enactment of Phase II of the study arose from the information the students generated in Phase I, as well as, some of the research questions. The information provided by the students made it clear that the social studies program they were currently in needed examination from their point of view and from the teachers'. Two instruments were designed to investigate the current programs and are described below.

A list of 22 topics from the sixth-grade curriculum, 24 topics of interest generated by students in Phase I of the study, and 16 instructional/learning methods was compiled by the researcher. Students were asked to check off topics they remembered studying and learning methods their teachers used with them during the year. Teachers were given the same list and asked to check off topics they taught or instructional methods they employed during the year.

Purpose: To compare what was remembered by the students to what was taught by the teachers and determine any discepencies.

Using the same list as in Phase II-A but with different instructions, students were asked to check off topics they would be interested in studying about and learning methods

they preferred. Teachers were given the same list and asked to check off topics they felt students would be most interested in studying about and methods they felt students preferred.

Purpose: To determine if the topics of concern generated by the students in Phase I of the study are preferred over the curriculum topics; determine if there is a difference between the methods used and the methods preferred by the students; determine if there is a difference between what students are interested in studying and what teachers believe they would be interested in studying; and determine if there is a difference between the learning methods that students prefer and the methods that teachers think they prefer.

The first part of Phase II had a 133 student participants, the second, 144 student participants. Four teachers participated in the survey; two of the teachers taught two social studies classes each, and two of the teachers taught one class each.

Though these two instruments produced interesting results, it should be noted that they did not include all aspects of the total curriculum, program, teaching methods or styles, and topics were presented in very general terms rather than specifically. Teachers did confirm, however,

that the lists gave a good, overall view of the social studies program as far as the curriculum and instructional/learning method items.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Phase I-A

As an introductory activity for the study, students were asked to come up with a list of questions they felt were worth answering. They were directed to write as many as they could think of but at least one. Further explanation was required for some students in each class, so they were told to try to think of anything that was or had been on their minds that they felt needed answering or that had never been answered to their satisfaction. They were also told to imagine a person who could answer any question that a sixth grader might have, and if they met this special person, what would they ask.

One familiar with this age group would probably have some preconceived notion of what the students would ask, but the results show many to have questions of high complexity and mature thought. The results show an awareness of world problems, personal problems, family issues, and social issues. What comes through clearly is the number of things children this age are exposed to and their questions about them.

Through observing the students during this activity, there was a general feeling of seriousness toward their handling of it. There was little conversation or other distraction during the activity. Privacy was ensured to the

students and apparently valued by most as they covered their questions while writing them and folded their papers before anyone could look. They were not interested in brainstorming this activity and the results will show why this may have been hard for some had it been employed.

The questions generated have been placed in categories created by the researcher. Though some questions may fit into more than one category, the most definitive was chosen. There were 60 subjects in the sample giving an average of approximately two questions per child. This average is misleading as some students came up with only one question, whereas others came up with six or more.

The results are presented on the following pages, and a brief analysis will follow. Questions marked with an * were considered to be extremely insightful into the lives of the students as determined by the researcher.

Self

-Why does no one understand my drawings?
-How many grams does my foot weigh?
-Will running away from home cause more trouble than you're already in? *
-Why are people fat?
-Why do people ask if you're a virgin?
-Why do I have so many questions?
-Why do you get to a certain age and everything changes even your looks? *
-Will I get married?

-How many kids will I have?

-What am I going to be in the future?

-Will I get married and have children?

-What will I do for my work?

-Will I have children?

-Will I be a pro soccer or basketball player?

-What will I be doing for a job?

-Will I abuse my children? *

Parents

-Why do parents fight? *

-Why do parents get divorced? *

-Why do parents get drunk and beat kids? *

-Why do my parents always fight? *

-Why are my parents divorced? *

-Why are my parents doing pot? *

-Why is it when my parents' friends come over, I always have to go to my room? *

-Why do parents after they're divorced hate each other forever and ever and make everybody else hurt? *

-Why did my mom want us back if all she ever did was take drugs and bring guys home every night? *

-Why are some parents so negative about girlfriends and boyfriends?

-Why do my parents take drugs? *

-Why do people get married and then divorced? *

-Why isn't my unreal dad married to my mom? *

-Why do people get married? *

-Why does my mom holler at me when I don't do work?

-I'm scared to go see my real dad cause he yelled at me and punched me in the chest, what should I do? *

-Why should I have to do all the jobs at home that my mom should do?

-Why don't my parents give me money if I don't earn it?

-Will my parents die soon? *

-Why are parents so mean? You know they love you but they don't show it. *

-Why do parents fight? *

Siblings

-Why do sisters act like babies?

-Why do we have sisters?

School

-Why do we have school?

-Why do we have principals?

-Why do we have teachers?

-Why does my teacher hate me? *

-Why do teachers use power to control kids? *

-Why do we have to go to school, why can't we just learn at home?

-Why is my teacher so mean?

-Why is there discipline?

-Why do we go to school when we can learn at home?

-Why do we need teachers?

-Why do teachers think they rule the world?

-Why do we have homework when we know the subject?

-Why is the vice-principal so mean?

-Why do we need school, couldn't we get educated at home?

-Why do we go to school for so long?

-Why don't teachers like to dress like kids do?

-Do teachers ever party, I mean really party? *

-Why is my teacher so mean sometimes?

-Will I pass sixth grade?

-Will I graduate?

-Why do teachers get mad so easily?

-Why do teachers give so much work?

Peers

-Why does a friend always act weird like when you write good or do better in grades and she gets mad, or when you talk to her and she walks away and starts talking to other people and ignores you when you try to explain to her? *

-Why do people judge you by your clothes and not your feelings? *

-Why do boys say you're straight? *

-Why do some kids have to be jerks?

-Why are some people so gross?

-Why is D so weird?

-Why do sixth graders have so many questions?

-Why do teenagers act so tough?

-Why do eighth graders have to show they're so tough?

-Why do alot of kids judge you by clothes and looks?

-Why doesn't C wash his face?

-Why don't some kids worry about getting into trouble?

-Why are kids so mean sometimes? *

-Why don't kids treat things that don't belong to them good? *

-Why do kids fart all the time for attention?

-Why do kids pick their noses?

-Why do some kids think they're tough?

Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco

-Why do people take drugs? *

-Why is it so bad to smoke? *

-Why do people smoke? *

-Why do people drink? *

-Why is it so bad for people to smoke? *

-Why do so many people use drugs? *

-Why is cocaine so expensive? *

-Why do people take drugs and alcohol when it can harm you? *

-Why can't people under-age smoke or drink? *

-Will I take drugs? *

Life and Death

-Why do people get cancer? *

-Why do people die? *

-Why are some kids born deformed? *

-Why do we die?

-Why do we live?

-What's life for, why are we here? *

-Why do you die?

-Why do you need to have sex to keep life going?

-Why do some babies die as soon as they're born from their mother's stomach? *

-How did my mom get cancer? *

-How can people cure disease?

-What is life about? *

-How come God doesn't save special people and lets them die? *

-Am I going to die soon?

-Where will I die?

Fighting and Killing

-Why do people kill people?

-Why do people fight against one another?

-Why do people go around killing other people?

-Why do people hurt each other physically, mentally, and calling names? *

-Why do people kill others?

-How come people beat people up?

-Why do people kill animals?

-Why do people kill other people?

-Why do we fight everyone?

-Why do we try to kill other people?

Problems with Other Countries

-Why does Russia not trust other countries?

-How come we are against the Soviet Union?

-Why don't we like people in Russia or places like that? *

-Why is Khadaffi so ignorant?

-Why is there terrorism?

-Why can't the world be friends?

-Are we, as Americans, going to boycott German wheat?

-Are we going to tell Ronnie Reagan to waste Khadaffi?

-Should Americans stop going on vacations to Europe?

-Is it true that the U.S. owns half the world and Russia owns the other half?

-Do you think if we gave ourselves up to Russia they would let us go free?

-Why are we fighting with Libya?

War

-Why are there wars when there can peace?

-Why do there have to be world wars?

-Why can't the whole world of people be nice to each other?

-Why do we have wars?

-Why do countries fight? We're powerful but we can't win all the time.

-I don't want war, must it happen in my lifetime?

-Why are there always wars?

-What's war and how does it get started?

Nuclear War

-Why were nuclear weapons invented? Most people know it will backfire and no one will survive.
-Even with the nuclear weapons we have, why do we keep making more?
-How come there's nuclear war?
-Is there going to be a nuclear war and everyone be dead? - Is everyone going to be dead and me alive?
-Will the nuclear bomb blow up and everyone die?
-Why is there nuclear war?
-Why do we have nuclear bombs, missles, etc?
-Are we going to have a nuclear war in my lifetime?
-Will the nuclear war really blow up the earth?
-Are we going to have a nuclear World War III?
-Are we going to be wasted in a nuclear war?
-Will we have a nuclear war?

Universe and God

-How did people and other things get on earth?
-Is there a God?
-At one time, were the continents together?
-Was there an Atlantis?
-Where does the galaxy end?
-Why do the stars twinkle?
-Is there really a heaven?
-What's it going to be like in the year 2020? Am I going to be dead?

-Who made the universe? I think God did but some people think it was reincarnation, but if it is reincarnation, who made the first human or animal (etc.)?

-Are there really ghosts?

-Can I go to the moon?

-Can I live on the moon?

-How was the world made?

-Are we going to be in space in the 22nd century?

-How were the craters on the moon made?

-How far do you think we'll make it in space?

-What lives on other planets?

World Situations

-Why isn't President Reagan worrying about war instead of trying to be friends with everyone?

-Why isn't anyone doing anything about starving people when we can?

-Why do some people have money and other people don't?

-Why are there criminals?

Miscellaneous

-Why do we have houses?

-Why are you here?

-How do they make waterproof watches?

-Why are we doing this?

-Why did the spaceship Challenger blow up?

-Why does everything cost so much?

-Why do people steal?

-Does a dog talk in English?

-Why do things cost so much these days?

-Why is it bad for kids to make sex?

-How much power does steam have?

-Can anyone go to the very bottom of the ocean?

-How much power does nature have?

-How many cells in the human body?

-Who discovered paper?

-Who discovered Pluto?

The results of this initial activity show that the students do have a variety of questions on their minds, requiring both simple and complex answers. The broad range of questions also suggests that many of the students at this age are concerned about things beyond their own "world" yet many questions fall into categories of a more personal or real nature.

The questions denoted by asterisks were described earlier as showing insight into the lives of the students who raised them and are highly indicative of the times we live in and provide a reflection of our society. The students who brought these questions to the attention of the researcher seem to be calling out for answers to them. A few students even asked during the activity if they would get answers for their questions and it was difficult to tell them, "Not at this time."

Many of the questions pertaining to the world show a true concern on the part of the students. In particular were the questions that focus on nuclear war. Within these questions are found many fears and unknowns, enough to make anyone at any age think seriously about what these students want answers to.

The results of the activity were most encouraging and achieved the purpose of laying the foundation for the activities to come. I could not help thinking though, that these questions raised by the students would almost be enough to base an entire problem-solving curriculum on.

Phase I-B

The second activity designed to approach to social-issue idea was a drawing activity. Students were asked simply to draw two pictures, one of a situation with them in it that made them feel happy, and another situation with them in it that made them feel sad or bothered. They were also told to explain the reason for the feeling on the back.

Approximately fifty minutes was scheduled for this activity and the majority of the students finished well within the time limit. The pictures they drew would be considered sketches rather than carefully done drawings, and most were done in pencil or pen even though crayons were available to use. The type of paper they were provided (standard ditto paper) may account for the lack of highly

detailed work, but the nature of the activity did not require "master drawings" and this was emphasized to the students so as not to inhibit the poorer artist. The option of writing a paragraph about the situations was given and a few students chose this method for their responses.

This activity was conducted in three classes and the total sample was 53. Two of the 53 did not complete the sad picture.

The subject of each picture and the reason for the feeling are presented in Appendix A. Table 1 and Table 2 give a breakdown of the drawings by category showing the percent of drawings in each category.

The results show that in the happy-picture category, the majority of students depicted situations involving friends or family. The findings may indicate that more positive emotions come from shared experiences on the part of most children this age.

The sad pictures proved to be the opposite of the above. The majority involved violent situations with the child as the victim or situations such as death or abandonment. The sad results would indicate that many students associate negative feelings with aloneness as opposed to the togetherness exhibited in the positive domain of emotions.

It is important to note that commonalities began to emerge between the initial question activity and this one, particularly in the sad category.

Table 1
Happy Situations

Situations depicted	% of students drawing a picture in the category
Friends (includes being with friends, parties, having fun with friends)	40%
Family members (includes parents, grandparents, siblings)	19%
Activities (includes sports, fishing etc.)	15%
Listening to music	6%
Getting gifts	4%
Seeing the U.S. use its power	4%
Value for the environment	4%
Paying debts	2%
A TV show	2%
Blowing things up	2%
Good sportsmanship	2%
Building in space	2%
Not getting in trouble	2%

Note. N = 53.

Table 2
Sad Situations

Situations depicted	% of students drawing a picture in the category
Verbal abuse (includes namecalling, teasing, yelling)	26%
Death or illness (includes family members and friends)	20%
Killing (includes warfare and senseless killing	16%
Accidents (includes car, fire and other types)	12%
Being left behind (includes divorce, friends, family members)	12%
Physical abuse	4%
World hunger	2%
Litter	2%
Destruction	2%
Drugs	2%
Robbery	2%
Stepping in manure	2%

Note. N = 51.

Phase I-C

The third activity presented to the students was designed to determine if they could identify problems in seven specific areas. The areas included neighborhood, community, school, society, and the world, along with peers and problems students felt were concerns of their parents.

Students were given directions for the activity, and any terms they did not understand were clarified. The greatest number of questions about terms concerned what was meant by peers and society, and the difference between neighborhood and community. These terms were clarified and the students were directed to choose a partner they could work well with. Each pair was given a three page chart with the seven categories and plenty of room for their problems to be listed. They were told to come up with at least two problems in each category, and more if possible.

As would be expected, some pairs worked better together than did others, but all students were able to generate problems in most of the categories, and no group turned in a blank chart.

A wide variety of problems was generated and many of the same types of problems showed up in different categories. One of the classes contained students well below grade level and the activity terminated earlier than the time limit (possibly due to the students' inability to write for any extended period of time), so brainstorming was employed. Through this method, a quite extensive list for

each category was generated but can only be presented as a group effort representing one individual response in the data results.

The category lists along with the number of times each problem was generated are presented on Tables 3-9 on the following pages. Three classes were used for this activity, comprising a total of 32 pairs of students.

The students proved successful at generating a multitude of problems in the specific categories presented in this activity. Because of the wide variety of problems and the fact that many were identified as problems by only one or two groups, a simple analysis of the results is nearly impossible. A small number of problems were mentioned in connection with most of the categories: fighting, robbery/theft, drug abuse, physical abuse, and littering/pollution. On the other hand, most of the problems that students cited at a more local level either disappeared or came under a wider heading at the society and world levels. The reverse is also true, in that many society and world problems had no counterpart at the more local level.

The results from the categories may indicate that students of this age group make a distinction between their "real" world and the world that lies beyond that. Though many problems were generated in that world beyond, they are of a different nature and almost appear far away to the students. It is also obvious from the results that many

students are unclear about what is meant by society as opposed to the world, even though the two were defined before the activity began.

These student-generated lists could have been presented to each student individually to determine if the problems generated by others were also viewed as problems by them, but time constraints and the expense of duplicating the seven lists for each student made this impractical. Mass consensus by show of hands was another possibility, but this idea was abandoned because of the possibility that students would be influenced by how friends voted. If this method were to be used in the regular classroom to allow students to generate problems, the individual consensus idea would be recommended.

The results of this activity do show that students at this grade level are more than capable of generating a variety of problems that demonstate their awareness of problems in specific categories.

Table 3
Problems in My Neighborhood

Problem	Number of times identified
fighting	8
robbery	7
littering	5
loud noises	5
vandalism	4
break-ins	3
bullies	3
drinking	3
neighbors	3
not enough people around	3
animal abuse	2
dogs barking	2
drugs	2
murder	2
speeding	2
trespassing	2
a little girl gets beaten	1
arguments	1
boys make girls do stuff	1
cats	1
cutting trees	1
lack of respect for property	1
living next to school	1
not enough to do	1
pollution	1
rapes	1
reckless driving	1
suicide	1
too many cars	1
too many chores	1
wild animals on our property	1

Note. N = 32 pairs.

Table 4
Problems in My Community

Problem	Number of times identified
robbery	11
drugs	8
vandalism	7
animal abuse	4
dull environment	4
drinking	3
fighting	3
litter	3
shoplifting	3
drunk driving	2
kidnapping	2
people dying	2
boys	1
car wrecks	1
foul language	1
gangs	1
hookers	1
money	1
no gas stations	1
not enough land	1
not enough stores	1
poaching	1
poor people	1
property line disputes	1
punks	1
schools	1
sex	1
sexual abuse	1
speeding	1
taxes	1
tearing up roads to widen them	1
trees cut down	1

Note. N = 32 pairs.

Table 5
Problems in My School

Problem	Number of times identified
drugs	14
fighting	14
vandalism	7
alcohol	3
litter	3
older kids picking on us	3
pushing	3
some teachers	3
homework	2
smoking	2
advisories	1
arguing	1
bossy people	1
counselors	1
cussing	1
drug pushers	1
farting	1
gangs	1
names on the board	1
people getting beat up	1
poor sportsmanship	1
rules not followed	1
rumors	1
some boys	1
theft	1
vice-principal doesn't listen	1
weapons	1
office people	1

Note. N = 32 pairs.

Table 6
Problems with Peers

Problem	Number of times identified
fighting	13
arguments	4
drugs	4
older kids pushing you around	4
pushing	2
teasing	2
bossy people	1
boys make you do stuff	1
foul language	1
getting in trouble	1
getting shot with darts	1
girls are snobs	1
girls breaking up with you	1
having friends taken away	1
having my brother in class	1
jealousy	1
kids acting too cool	1
kids bug you while you work	1
kids who act immature	1
kids who think they're tough	1
mixed up emotions	1
no friends	1
no one likes me	1
people who tattle	1
poor sports	1
saying stupid things	1
selfish people	1
sex	1
shoplifting	1
smoking	1
spit wads	1
spitting	1
trash	1
yelling	1

Note. N = 32 pairs

Table 7
Problems of Parents

Problem	Number of times identified
if kids are taking drugs	9
kids	7
fighting	5
money	4
grades	3
alcohol	2
arguing	2
boyfriends you have	2
abuse	1
clothes	1
curfew not being followed	1
divorce	1
don't understand kid's problems	1
friends	1
getting yelled at	1
when I yell at them	1
Khadaffi	1
kids getting in wrecks	1
kids having sex	1
kids in trouble at school	1
murders	1
my dad	1
not listening to kids	1
our education	1
our rooms	1
sex	1
stealing	1
step children	1
themselves	1
trespassing	1
us not getting homework in	1
when I don't call if I'm late	1
work	1
us going places alone	1

Note. N = 32 pairs.

Table 8
Problems in Our Society

Problem	Number of times identified
Libya	6
murder	5
war	5
drugs	4
terrorism	4
money	3
fighting	2
hunger	2
poverty	2
prostitution	2
robbery	2
Russia	2
taxes	2
alcohol	1
child abuse	1
crime	1
drunk driving	1
highjacking	1
homeless	1
hunting	1
kidnapping	1
littering	1
no jobs for kids	1
not enough jobs	1
nuclear radiation	1
nuclear war	1
nuclear waste	1
perversion	1
strikes	1
the president	1
the world	1
vandalism	1

Note. N = 32 pairs.

Table 9
Problems in the World

Problem	Number of times identified
war	11
starvation	10
terrorism	8
Libya	5
drugs	3
highjacking	3
homeless	3
nuclear radiation	3
bombs	2
death	2
earthquakes	2
economics	2
litter	2
murder	2
nuclear war	2
pollution	2
robbery	2
AIDS	1
child abuse	1
China	1
destroying	1
everything	1
explosives	1
famines	1
farms	1
fighting	1
gases	1
high prices	1
hunting	1
killing animals	1
lack of love	1
nuclear accidents	1
nuclear threat	1
poor people	1
population	1
prostitution	1
rape	1
Russia	1
sadness	1
tankers	1

Note. N = 32 pairs.

Phase I-D

The SRA Study Prints were utilized with one class of 26 students. Each print contained a large black and white picture involving people in a problematic situation to be interpreted by the students. Students were asked to work with a partner, choose a print, study it, and answer the following questions about it:

1) Do you see any kind of a problem or potential problem in the picture?
2) If so, describe it.
3) How did the problem occur, or what caused it?
4) If you were a part of what's going on in the picture and part of the problem situation, what would you do to take care of the problem?
5) Have you ever been in the situation shown in the picture or a similar one?
6) What did you do to solve the problem when you were in that situation?

Question 1 and 2 were aimed at problem identification. Question 3 sought a reason or cause for the problem. Question 4 addressed the solution aspect of problem solving. Questions 5 and 6 were used to determine if there was a relationship of the problem depicted to the student.

Many of the students took on the study print task with enthusiasm and answered the questions to the best of their abilities. It was observed, however, that some of the

students answered simplistically, without going into much detail or even attempting to answer some of the questions. This may be attributed to to any of the following factors: that students are rarely faced with problem solving activities of this nature, that the task was written rather than discussed, or some students took advantage of the freedom of the situation and did not produce what they could have.

The following results support one or more of the three factors. Wording and spelling are taken verbatim from the students' answer sheets; an asterisk (*) denotes if any of the six questions the students answered, achieved the intended purpose of the questions.

A written description is provided for each study print (descriptions are taken directly from the SRA kit).

Question #	Response
(Print 9-Boy arguing with mother turning off TV)	
*1 & 2	Yes, it's a little kid saying, "But mom!" because his mom is turning off the TV.
*3	His mom didn't want him to watch TV.
*4	Go read a book. Play a toy game. Listen to radio.
*5 & 6	Yes, I said, "But mom!" and went to play.

(Print 6-Girl teasing another girl)

*1 & 2	Yes, a girl in a picture is pointing at another girl (she's going, you got cooties).
*3	she's had them
*4	spray her down with cootie spray
5 & 6	no, freak out

(Print 18-Skid Row)

*1 & 2	yes, a bum sleeping on the streets
*3	alcouhall (alcohol)
*4	get him a job
5 & 6	no

(Print 30-Girl and boy babysitting)

*1 & 2	yes, the baby threw the food at me
*3	the kid did not want to eat
*4	I would put the kid in her crib
*5 & 6	Yes, if I was the baby I would throw the food in her face

(Print 9- Boy arguing with mother turning off TV)

*1 & 2	Yes, there might be a argument
*3	When she turned off the TV.
*4	Ask her nicely to turn it up and on.
5 & 6	no

(Print 11-Girl apparently cheating on a test)

*1 & 2	yes, a kid trying to think
*3	A teacher gave a assiment
*4	I would ask a teacher
5 & 6	no

(Print 33-Girls arguing about a microscope)

*1 & 2	yes, the girl isn't sharing with the other girl
3	don't know
*4	go tell
5 & 6	no

(Print 35-Boy with violin being teased by other boys)

*1 & 2	yes, 3 boys are making funny of the other boy who has a cello
*3	3 boys like baseball the other music
*4	beat them up
*5 & 6	yeah, told my mom

(Print 3-Girl banging fist on candy machine)

*1 & 2	yes, Her hand is not on the button
*3	she might be blind and need glasses
*4	get my mom and dad
5 & 6	no

(Print 17-Boy in hospital bed)

*1 & 2	yes, accedents of getting hurt
3	
4	can't tell
5 & 6	no

(Print 1-Physically handicapped boy umpiring softball game)

*1 & 2	yes, boy might say he is safe fight may break out
*3	sliding into home
*4	agree to the ump
*5 & 6	yes, finally agreed

(Print 32-Girl shoving boy in line)

*1 & 2	yes, a little girl pushing another person
*3	reaching for some milk
*4	tell her to stop it
5 & 6	no

(Print 36-Brothers arguing in bedroom)

*1 & 2	yes, the boy in the bed droped the comic books
*3	When he droped the comic books
*4	I would tell him to pick the books up and put them back.
*5 & 6	yes, He kept messing up my bed so I told him to make it

(Print 7-Boy considering shoplifting)

*1 & 2	yes, The person is shoplifting
*3	when he wanted a pack of cigrets
*4	I would tell him what kind of problem and how much trouble we could get into
5 & 6	no

(Print 37-Boy and girl watching parents argue)

*1 & 2	yes, argument between parents
*3	kids say something about one parent
*4	apoligize and say it was my fault
5 & 6	no

(Print 16-Principal directing girl into her office)

*1 & 2	yes, the girl got in trouble
*3	she mouthed off to the teacher
*4	say I'm very sorry for what we said to the teacher. I wright it 400 times
*5 & 6	yes, call home and say what I said to the teacher

(Print 40-Group of boys walking toward boy)

*1 & 2	yes, it looks like the kid is getting the heck knocked out of him by a street gang
*3	The gang wants something to do
*4	get out of their faces
5 & 6	no

(Print 23-Girl sitting on floor in empty room)

*1 & 2	yes, there is a little girl sitting by her self
*3	maybe no one like her or she ran away
4	I don't care
5 & 6	yes, nunthing

(Print 36-Group of girls and group of boys glaring at each other)

*1 & 2	Yes, well the boys don't want to play with the girls and the girls think that's not fair
*3	It occured cause the boys think they're to good to play with
*4	I would talk to them about it
5 & 6	no

(Print 24-Teacher in front of class holding up broken vase)

*1 & 2	yes, I see a classroom full of kids with a teacher asking who broke the vase
*3	anyone or anything could have broke it
4	
*5 & 6	yes, I broke a cup of my grandma's house and I told her I broke it.

(Print 28-Children picketing against air pollution)

*1 & 2	yes, the kids are pickiting pollotion
*3	People throwing garbage
*4	picket
5 & 6	no

(Print 23-Boy reluctant about taking younger sister to play with him)

*1 & 2	Yes, well it seems like the boy doesn't really want to be with this girl
3	because the boy doesn't look to excited to have the girl with him
*4	I would talk to both of them about the problem
5 & 6	no

(Print 7-Boy considering shoplifting)

*1 & 2	yes, shoplifting sigarets
*3	habit of smoking
*4	try to change their mind
5 & 6	no

(Print 28-Girl teaching boys and girls to dance)

*1 & 2	yes, the girls are laughing at the boys
*3	because they walk funny
4	I would feel real bad
5 & 6	no

(Print 35-Boy with violin being teased by other boy)

*1 & 2	yes, three boys are asking him to do something wrong
3	it hasn't
*4	I'd say forget it
*5 & 6	yes, I said forget it

(Print 2-Girl watching other children ejoying group activity)

*1 & 2	yes, one girl is not playing the board game
3	I don't know
*4	I would go play somewhere else
5 & 6	no

(Print 27-Water pollution)

*1 & 2	yes, litter
*3	because people don't care
*4	clean up
5 & 6	no

(Print 33-Girls arguing about microscope)

*1 & 2	yes, there fighting over a microscope
*3	one person wants the same thing as the other person
*4	I would say don't fight over it just take turns.
5 & 6	no

Phase I-E

During the course of the study, nineteen interviews were held. The purpose of the interviews was to delve deeper into the world of the sixth grader; to discover more than paper and pencil activities could offer.

Ten boys and nine girls were asked about their interests, concerns, positive and negative aspects of their social studies programs, and ideas for improving those programs. Of the 19 students interviewed, nine were selected for further questions that dealt with observations of other students, the purpose of social studies, and their choice of a theoretical social studies program. Of the nine interviewees selected for the latter questions, three were considered high, three middle, and three low in learning ability by their teachers. The purpose of subdividing this smaller group for specific questioning was to determine if there would be a difference in reasoning, observation, and solution between ability groups.

Interests

The first question asked of all interviewees was, "What are you interested in at your age?" Table 10 shows the interests mentioned by the nineteen students. It is important to note that the number given to each interest represents how many times that interest was mentioned by students. Some students listed many interests while others listed two or three.

Interests that received one mention were: motorcycles, hunting, Indian culture, collecting stuffed animals, school, getting grades up, math, science, nature, space, video games, computer programming, girls, toys, fishing, shopping, and fighting.

Table 10
Students' Interests

Interests	# of times identified
Sports (includes football, basketball baseball, wrestling, skating, & swimming)	17
Animals (includes riding horses, horse shows, & working with animals)	10
Being with friends	8
Watching TV (favorite shows are comedies and adventures)	8
Working/having a job	6
Building/making things	6
Music	3
Reading	3
Riding bikes	3
Being with the family	2
Art	2
News	2

Note. N = 19.

Approximately 90 percent of the students mentioned sports of some kind as a main interest. Most boys liked football, basketball, baseball, or wrestling and a few of the girls mentioned one or more of these sports as a favorite activity. Most of the girls however, listed horseback riding, being with friends, skating, or swimming as more enjoyable than competitive sports. Interests varied greatly when students talked more about individual-based interests. The range of interests is shown on the table, but even more so in the list of interests that received one mention each.

Some of the students already involved in money-earning jobs showed enthusiasm when talking about it. They also appeared to be thinking more about what they would do in the future than the students not working for money.

It was most encouraging to talk to these students about their interests and discover how many shared the same interests with others as well as having their own special or private interests. Individuality clearly emerged during this part of the interview process.

Concerns

The second question asked in the interviews was, "What things are you concerned about at your age?" Table 11 lists the concerns mentioned by the nineteen interviewees. Numbers indicate how many times a concern was brought up by students.

Table 11
Students' Concerns

Problems	# of times identified
Wars	9
Career	8
Being teased or picked on	7
Nuclear war	5
Peer pressure	5
Terrorism	5
Drunk driving	3
Pollution	3
Reagan's decisions	3
Divorce	2
Drinking	2
Family hardship/illness	2
Fighting at school	2
Kidnapping	2
Murders	2
Radiation	2
Being new at school	1
Car wrecks	1
Hunger	1
My dad driving trucks	1
Nervous before horse shows	1
No sports for sixth grade	1
Prejudice	1
Shooting at people	1
Shuttle deaths	1
Smoking	1
Vandalism at school	1
Waste	1

Note. N = 19.

The results of the questioning show that students are concerned not only about close, personal things but societal and world problems as well. All of the concerns that were mentioned two or more times by the interviewees were also brought up by students in other phases of the study. This was an important factor to the entire study as consensus by using various methods was intended. It is important to note that eight of the students interviewed did not participate in the problem generating activity that many of the concerns came up in, yet the majority of those eight listed identical concerns as those generated by other students.

War and the threat of nuclear war appears to be a prime concern of children this age. They make a clear distinction between the two types of war as well. Many of their fathers were involved in the Vietnam War and they relate to that type of war through them. Others see the reports of wars around the world on the news and know they differ from nuclear war. Nuclear war is an unknown yet feared type of war for them. They base their feelings about it on what the media presents, discussions at school and home, and their own imagination. Their main concern about nuclear war is dying. Terrorism, a form of warfare, is also a concern of some. This may be due to the fact that the Libya bombing had just occurred and there was much talk around the whole school about the incident and what led up to it.

Over a fourth of the students mentioned drunk driving as a concern. One of the students had much personal

experience with this; his father, grandmother, and uncle had all been involved in car accidents due to driving while drunk. He had this comment to make about it, "I don't think I'll ever drink. If you can't handle drinking and driving, then you can't handle drinking itself." He had also witnessed parties on the reservation where he lives that involved drinking, fighting, and shootouts. He said that at this point in his life he has seen what drinking does to others and doesn't want to do it himself. It would be interesting to talk to him in a few years to see if his attitude has changed due to heavy influence and peer pressure experienced on the reservation.

The concerns of the students at a more personal level revealed much about home situations and relationships with peers. Some mentioned death or illness in the family and the distress felt in such situations. Divorce also came up as a concern of two students who were having problems dealing with the breakup of their family and not truly understanding why. Nearly half of the students were concerned about being picked on or teased by others, yet when asked if they ever did the same to others, the majority answered yes. When asked why, most said that it was just something everybody did at this age and even though they didn't like it, they still did it. The same type of reasoning was true when some of the students talked about how they handled a problem with peers or siblings. Fighting or arguing was the top choice for problem solving even

though most admitted it didn't work. Going to a higher authority (teacher, parent, etc.) was the second choice for remedying a troublesome situation, but few of the students could come up with any better ideas on their own. Two of the girls mentioned talking things out calmly as their method of solving problems with others and said they avoided fighting as much as possible.

The students interviewed for this study had an easier time talking about their interests than their concerns. This was found in the pilot study as well. It may indicate that even though students are aware of problems or negative impacts on their lives at this age, they are not quite ready to deal with them or become overly-concerned about them. This was most evident when the students were asked what they would do to help solve societal and world problems they showed concern about. A few came up with ideas to make laws stricter or have world leaders talk more, but most, after contemplating the question said, "I don't know what to do."

During the course of the interviews, some of the students shared personal thoughts and ideas on specific social issues. Some also went through informal problem solving as questioning progressed. These expressions by the students will now be presented verbatim directly from the transcribed interviews. Students will be represented by a number and a G if a girl, B if a boy.

Comments on war and violence

I- What kinds of things concern you at your age?

1G-I don't know. Stuff like wars and stuff I guess.

I- What about war bothers you the most?

1G-I don't know.

I- What could happen in a war that might affect you?

1G-People get hurt!

I- Do you think war is something that could happen soon?

1G-Yeah.

I- What could countries do to help prevent war?

1G-Talk more.

I- Do you think they're doing enough talking?

1G-Not really.

I- What kinds of TV shows do you like?

2B-Miami Vice, A Team.

I- What do you like about those shows?

2B-The violence.

I- Do you see yourself as a violent person? Do you like fighting?

2B-Yes!

I- What do you like about fighting?

2B-Lots of things.

I- What makes you want to fight?

2B-I don't know, I just like to fight.

I- What do you get out of fighting?

2B-Fun.

I- Do you ever get hurt?

2B-Sometimes.

I- What do you feel when you get hurt?

2B-Pain!

I- Do you like being hurt, being in pain?

2B-Yeah.

I- Do you like putting someone else in pain?

2B-Sometimes.

I- Why do you like it?

2B-I don't know.

I- Do you think you'd want to be a violent adult?

2B-Yeah.

I- What kind of violence would you do?

2B-Wrestling.

I- How about shooting people?

2B-No.

I- Then just kind of harmless fighting?

2B-Yeah.

I- What about punching people?

2B-Maybe, not really.

I- What would be a situation where you would really want to hurt somebody?

2B-Getting into a real fight.

I- What would cause that to happen?

2B-Like if someone picks on me or something like that.

I- So you would fight if someone did something to you?

2B-Yeah.

I- Are you more aware of things in the world?

3B-Yeah.

I- What types of problems are you seeing in the world?

3B-Well, I'm starting to see all the violence going on, and I'm starting to like the news...and it's getting weird. You hear about people dying and before it was just normal, and now you're thinking, that's a life, you know, someone's dead. And it's weird.

I- So by being more aware of it, are you finding yourself thinking about these real things in a different way?

3B-Uh-huh.

I- What types of things on the news bother you the most when you hear about them?

3B-Terrorism.

I- What disturbs you the most about terrorism?

3B-Alot of people get killed and it isn't fair because they haven't done nothing.

I- How do you feel terrorists should be dealt with?

3B-I think they should be hung, killed for what they've done, or just keep them in jail.

I- Do you think the U.S. is handling the terrorism problem the right way?

3B-I don't think Reagan should have bombed Libya. That made Khadaffi more mad.

I- What could Reagan have done?

3B-He could have arranged a meeting with Khadaffi or tried to, or he could have sent some Americans to talk or he could have gone to work it out with Khadaffi.

I- Do you think nations having problems with each other should do more talking?

3B-Yeah.

I- Do you ever have problems with kids at school concerning fighting?

3B-Yeah.

I- How do you handle it?

3B-Well, if they're just playing around I just hang it off, but if someone hits me in the face I just go crazy! I don't like people touching my face.

I- Do you hit back?

3B-Sometimes, if they touch me in the face I nail them.

I- Does that take care of it?

3B-Sometimes.

I- Have you ever gotten into bigger problems because of it?

3B-No.

I- Does it happen to you alot?

3B-Very little, rarely.

I- Do you see others who this happens to alot or who start fights?

3B-Yeah.

I- Why is that? Why are some kids always in fights and others not?

3B-Because they're always looking for a fight. They're always looking for bad things about the person instead of thinking about the good and then they just try and make a fight out of that.

I- Do you think they enjoy fighting?

3B-Yeah.

I- What makes someone enjoy violence?

3B-Well, they have to be pretty weird. They like the blood or something, they like the feel of hitting, just weird.

I- Do you think they like getting hurt?

3B-I don't think they mind it. I know a few kids and they don't care, just as long as they get the other one.

I- Do you think fighting is a big problem in this school?

3B-See, there's lots of fights that the principal and vice-principal, no one knows about, yeah.

I- How could the kids that don't really like fighting get involved and start making a difference so there aren't as many fights?

3B-I don't think they could. Cause the person that likes to fight would just fight them and the kid that doesn't want to fight would get his butt kicked and get hurt real bad.

I- So you think it's always going to be a problem with just those few?

3B-Yeah.

I- Do you think there are more good kids than bad kids?

3B-Not really.

I- You see it as a real problem then?

3B-Yeah.

I- What are your worries? Do you think about problems?

4B-Yeah.

I- Can you tell me one?

4B-Probably terrorism.

I- What bothers you the most about terrorism?

4B-Khadaffi.

I- What about Khadaffi?

4B-He goes around killing people for no reason.

I- How do you feel about that?

4B-I think it's not right. I think we should go over there and bomb him.

I- Do you think what the U.S. did by bombing Libya was right?

4B-Yeah.

I- Should we continue until the problem is solved?

4B-Uh-huh.

I- Are there other things that worry you?

4B-Nuclear war, Russia.

I- What bothers you the most about nuclear war or Russia?

4B-One atom bomb could wipe out half of the U.S.

I- Do you think that's going to happen?

4B-Probably not, at least not in my lifetime. I don't think so but you never know.

I- If that were to happen, what do you think the results would be?

4B-I'd die!

I- Would you want to die or survive it?

4B-I'd want to die.

I- Why?

4B-Why would you want to survive it if there's hardly anybody alive? You know, you'd be walking down the street and you could see dead people all over the place.

I- Do you think most kids your age are concerned about nuclear war?

4B-Yeah, but they just say we're going to die because of people who want war.

I- Does that bother you that someone else is going to do that to you?

4B-Yeah.

I- Is that a big worry?

4B-Yeah.

I- Any other problems or worries?

5G-Sort of. All the people who are starving are going to die sooner or later and President Reagan isn't doing anything about it cause he wants war and

stuff. He's making all these gushey guts and stuff, if he keeps not feeding people, there aren't going to be enough people to have a war.

Comments on substance abuse

I- Are you concerned about things happening around you in your own life?

6B-Yeah. Drunk driving, people who smoke, and people who use drugs and try to get you to do it.

I- Has that happened to you?

6B-Yeah, once in a while.

I- If someone offers you a cigarette, what do you do?

6B-Well, usually I just walk away, but when they start, I just think in my mind, what jerks! Doing that and then trying to get other people to do that.

I- So you've already decided that's not for you?

6B-Yep.

I- Have you let them know you feel the way you do about them?

6B-No, cause they'll probably end up hurting me.

I- Has anyone ever tried to push drugs on you?

6B-Yeah.

I- What was that like?

6B-That was different because I thought, what a dummy! How do they know I couldn't have been an undercover cop and busted them. I felt, jeeze, that's really stupid! They can take their own stuff and do it on their own time.

I- But that's just what you thought, you didn't let them know?

6B-No.

I- So did you just walk away from the situation?

6B-Yeah, but then when they brought it out I went, shi..., and just walked away.

I- Do you think drugs and pushing drugs are a big problem around the school?

6B-Yes. I'll bet you what they try to do is let them have a little for free and when they get addicted they make lots of money.

I- Is that what you see happening?

6B-Yeah.

I- Is it the older kids who are selling it?

6B-Yeah, the eighth graders mainly, the rockers.

I- Any high schoolers?

6B-Yeah, I've seen a couple.

I- You've identified drugs as a problem in school, do you see any way it could be stopped?

6B-Teach kids how to do, what's it called, citizen arrest. Teach them how to do that. Also, tell somebody, ask friends what their names are. If you have a camera, take pictures or get other witnesses.

I- Why aren't more kids doing that?

6B-Probably because they're scared and if the people who got busted found out who narked, they'd kill 'em or hurt them real bad.

I- So there's a fear of getting hurt by narking on people?

6B-Yeah, cause they've got their friends.

I- Do you think there are more kids who don't do drugs than do?

6B-Considering what age?

I- Well, in sixth grade.

6B-More kids are not doing it in sixth grade, except I know alot of sixth graders that chew.

I- If there are more people that don't do it, couldn't they do something about it by their numbers alone?

6B-Probably talk to people, tell them it's not good for them and try to help them stop.

I- Do the teachers in your classes ever try to help kids by talking about it?

6B-Yeah.

I- Does it help?

6B-Well, when they start talking about drugs and stuff in class, all the kids quiet down and start listening, so I think they're doing a good job. I know this one kid that was chewing and he hasn't chewed for about two years after a teacher talked about it.

I- Do all the teachers talk about it?

6B-All the ones I've had have.

I- Are there any concerns you have about things happening in the world or around you?

7G-Yeah, I'm worried about my grandparents because they're getting cancer from smoking alot, my grandma already has it. And my grandpa, cause something's wrong with his heart.

I- How old are they?

7G-I think my grandpa's sixty-five and my grandma's fifty something.

I- So they're not that old. Are there any other things you're finding yourself concerned about?

7G-About taking drugs and stuff like other people, they shouldn't do it.

I- Is that a big problem here at school?

7G-I hear alot about it.

I- But you don't see it that much?

7G-Uh-uh.

I- Do you think it's alot more talk than actually doing it?

7G-Yeah..

I- Have you ever been in a situation where someone's come up to you and offered you something?

7G-Yeah, I've had that done before.

I- Do you feel that's a real problem, that people are doing that to others?

7G-Yeah.

I- How do you handle that when it happens?

7G-If it happens to me, I just say no, and then I'd go and tell somebody that they're doing it.

I- Who would you tell?

7G-Well, if we're at school I'd just tell the principal.

I- Have you had to do that?

7G-Not yet.

I- How would you feel if it came to that point?

7G-I would tell, I don't feel right that they should be doing that.

I- And you wouldn't worry about getting beat up by the people you told on?

7G-Sort of.

I- But you'd feel strongly enough that you needed to tell?

7G-Uh-huh.

I- Do you think most kids feel the way you do and would go to the principal?

7G-Probably, cause most of my friends would do that I know.

I- Do you know anyone who has gone in and told?

7G-Well, at my other school, my friend was taking drugs at school but I didn't see her, she just told me about it and other people told me about it. But I didn't worry about it cause I didn't see it happening. If I had seen it happen, I would have went and told.

I- It sounds like you're someone who would take action then. Are there any other things that bother you out in the world?

7G-Drunk driving.

I- What worries you the most about that?

7G-Like if you're out in the car and you're driving around, and you see someone swerving around, that scares me...cause my other grandpa got killed by a drunk driver.

I- So that's happened to someone in your family and you can really relate to the problem.

7G-Yeah, and my aunt drinks too much, she drank too much and last month she died cause it ate up her liver.

I- So in your young life you've actually seen what too much drinking and smoking can do to people.

7G-Yeah.

Comments on stereotyping/prejudice

I- Is there anything else you're concerned about in the world?

8B-Illegal aliens.

I- What concerns you about them?

8B-Down in Florida, there's all them Cubans down there.

I- Why is that a problem?

8B-Cause some day I want to go there on vacation and if there are a bunch of Cubans there, I wouldn't trust 'em.

I- Where have you gotten your information about the Cubans in Florida?

8B-The news and my dad.

I- Do you think it's really that bad?

8B-No, but you're better safe than sorry.

I- So because a certain group of people live in a certain place, that would make you not want to go there?

8B-Not really.

I- How could you get over those feelings?

8B-Not go there.

I- Would that help you see how it really is?

8B-No.

I- How can you make sure for yourself that that's the situation down there?

8B-Go there.

I- Do you think you'd be taking a chance if you did?

8B-Not really.

Comments on murder/kidnapping

I- Is there anything else you're worried about in the world?

9G-Murderers. Cause I'm scared it's going to happen to me and somebody in my family.

I- What's the biggest thing about these murders that bothers you.

9G-Well, the kids. Because they should know not to go into a car with a stranger or a friend either, because they might try something on you.

I- So you're concerned about just the kids or all people this happens to.

9G-I'm talking about all people. I've heard about grown-ups getting murdered and stuff too.

I- How can we as a country, get together and do something about this?

9G-Well, if we all get together or something, we could fight it. Or just do something with the people who murder other people.

I- Something stronger than what's being done now?

9G-Yeah, like hang 'em or something.

Comments on divorce

I- Are there any things in the world or in your life that bother you?

10B-Well, my parents, they just got a divorce and you just never know what's going to happen.

I- Is this something that just happened recently.

10B-I think, two years ago.

I- How did you feel when it first happened compared to how you feel now?

10B-Shocked.

I- How did you work through that?

10B-I just got used to living with it, then my mom got remarried and that helped.

I- Have you lived with your mother all along?

10B-No, every other week.

I- Is that hard, going between two houses every other week?

10B-No, I think that sometimes it's a little better cause at my dad's house that's on a lake, I get to fish alot, so that's a real benefit. At my mom's house I get to run around alot so that's good too.

I- So you're kind of getting the best of both worlds? Even though it was hard at first, you're finding good things about your situation.

10B-Yeah.

Positive Things About Social Studies

In an attempt to determine the relevance of the social studies program to the students, they were asked during the interviews to list as many positive things as they could about it. Table 12 displays what the students liked about their program and numbers indicate how many times an aspect of the program was mentioned. The total number of participants was nineteen. It should also be noted that the social studies program did not include a social-issue, problem-solving component.

Table 12
Positive Aspects of Social Studies

Aspect	Number of students naming the aspect
Medieval Tournament	7
ancient history	6
projects	5
famous people	5
working for points	4
country reports	3
the teacher,	3
Age of Discovery	2
looking up answers in the book	2
Renaissance	2
research	2
review game	2
differences in the past and present	1
discussions	1
future report	1
small group work	1
tests	1
wars	1
wildlife films	1

The item listed most often as a positive aspect of the social studies program was the Medieval Tournament. This was a unit involving activities, choice assignments to earn ranks, studies about the Middle Ages, and culminated with a day of contests. Many of the students mentioned the idea of living the experience during this unit and wished more of their history lessons could be learned in this manner. Ancient history was a positive aspect according to six students. Most said they enjoyed learning about the past and saw some value in doing so. Making model-type projects was mentioned by five students who liked them because it gave them an opportunity to get away from the book and it was fun. Those students who spoke positively about famous people from history gave reasons such as how they got people together, the powerful things they did, the recognition of achievement, and their inventions. One student enjoyed doing a report about the future, his reason being that he was able to use his imagination.

Results of this questioning revealed that all of the students had difficulty coming up with more than one or two positive things to say about their social studies program. It was also apparent that most of the aspects mentioned had been those studied at the end of the year when the interviews took place.

Negative Things About Social Studies

The students were also asked to identify what they felt to be negative aspects of their social studies program. Table 13 displays what students dislike about social studies and numbers indicate how many times a negative aspect was mentioned. The total number of participants was nineteen.

Reading the book was the most disliked thing about social studies according to half of the students. Though most recognized the necessity of having the book as a source of information for their studies, nearly all said it was boring. Tests were another aspect of the program disliked by over one fourth of the students. One student mentioned that he did not like test review games because he saw no purpose in taking a test after showing you knew it all during the game. He felt if a test was necessary, there should be no review. Two of the students pointed out the fact that there was too much repitition in social studies programs year after year, a point also brought out in a study mentioned in the methodology chapter.

It is interesting to note that some of the aspects of the social studies program viewed as positive by some students were viewed as negative by others. This information helps to emphasize the difficulty teachers face in designing programs of any kind that meet the needs and interests of all students.

Table 13
Negative Aspects of Social Studies

Aspects	Number of students naming the aspect
reading the book	9
tests	5
dittos/worksheets	4
repetition each year	2
boring movies	1
Age of Discovery	1
history	1
not enough information in the book	1
packets	1
Queen Elizabeth I	1
questions from the book	1
reviews for tests	1
the teacher doesn't like me	1
vocabularies	1
writing about the future	1

Ideas for Improving the Social Studies Program

The final question asked of all nineteen students was, "How can teachers improve their social studies program in order for students to get more out of it?" Table 14 displays the students' responses and numbers indicate how many times a response was given. The total number of participants was nineteen.

This question evoked information in support of a more student-oriented approach to social studies. Most of the students mentioned the positive aspects they brought up previously, but in addition, the following suggestions were made: discussions about current events including social issues, talking about more relevant things, higher interest materials, and getting away from constantly using the book. The suggestions made by the students also lent support to a major premise of this study, namely that more interest-based learning needs to occur in a social studies program at this grade level.

Table 14
Ideas for Improving the Social Studies Program

Aspects	# of students making suggestion
activities to live the experience	7
discuss current events	7
projects	4
talk more about things we know	4
films of interest	3
have questions as you go along	2
point systems	2
talk about wars	2
year-long class project	2
don't use the book so much	1
games to learn things	1
learn one vocabulary word at a time	1
no dittos when you know the stuff	1
read out loud	1
relate things to the past better	1

Final Phase of the Interviews

Nine of the students participated in more extensive interviews that asked questions requiring reasoning, observation, and determining solutions. The nine students, as rated by their teachers, were divided into the following three groups: low, average, and high ability. There were three students in each group. In reporting the results of the questioning, each student has been identified with a number (1-9) and an L (low), A (average), or H (high).

Reasoning

Each student in the subgroup of nine was asked to answer the question, "Why do you have to learn social studies?" The reasons are:

1-L I don't understand why we learn it. Why do we need to learn about the past? I want to learn about now and the future.

2-L I don't know.

3-L History, so you know what happened in the world.

4-A To learn the history of the world and how we got to this point.

5-A I don't take it, they choose it. It's to teach history but the book's not from your view, it's from the writer's view. The teacher interprets it and then you understand it in your own mind.

6-A Why do we have social studies? I don't understand why.

7-H To learn from history, like wars, so things don't happen the same again. So we can make changes to overcome it.

8-H To know more about history, know why it happened so it doesn't happen again.

9-H To show kids how hard it was to live way back when and how good they're living now.

The students were not asked to explain their reasons beyond what they stated. The question sought an immediate response and nothing more. Of the seven students who gave reasons, all viewed social studies from a historical perspective. The high-ability students differed from the others in that they identified a relationship between the past and present/future.

The two students who do not understand why they take social studies cannot be ignored. This is a problem in itself. How can students be in a required subject area that they cannot see as purposeful? Is it the fault of the student, teacher, system, or all three? It is an alarming thought that if this question could be asked to ninety students, it is possible that twenty would not know why they take social studies.

Reasoning Through Observation

Following a brief conversation about observing how different students participated in class discussions, the nine students were asked the following question based on

their observations, "Why don't some kids participate in class discussions?" Their reasons were:

1-L They don't like social studies.

2-L They're tired of school work.

3-L They're bored.

4-A It's not cool to learn.

5-A They want attention.

6-A They just don't care about anything.

7-H They don't want to learn. They're not interested.

8-H They don't have learning ability, they want attention.

9-H The way they live at home, the way their parents are.

A variety of reasons emerge from this question and range from simplistic answers at the lower end to more complex reasoning at the higher end. Attitude and valuing are also apparent in the students' responses. It is interesting to see how the students view each other and how their reasoning is based on observation and experience. It would be of further interest to determine how many base their responses on observing that type of student and how many base their response on being that type of student.

Determining a Solution

To determine how the students would solve the problem of non-participating peers, they were asked the following

question, "How can teachers get these students to participate and become interested in class discussions?" Their solutions are:

1-L Split kids up into other classes.

2-L Split up the talkers in class.

3-L Just tell them to participate and if they don't, send them to ISS. (in school suspension)

4-A Teachers should talk like kids instead of always using proper grammar, get more on their level.

5-A Embarrasss them or send them to ISS to think about it.

6-A Find their interests, like do the history of rock and then they'll find other things.

7-H Do more things that they are interested in.

8-H At the beginning of the year give them choices of things to learn.

9-H Ask them questions, force them to be involved.

Students at the lower end and student 5-A tend to use punishment as an answer without actually solving the problem of getting students to participate. The average and higher ability students come closer to solutions but most are simply steps toward solving the problem. If the responses of those five students were combined however, they would form a viable solution.

It is apparent that these students are observing their classmates, can recognize problematic situations in classroom structure, and can generate ideas toward solving those problems. Even the idea of removing students rather than getting them to actively participate is seen as a realistic solution by some as they see this happening in their classes often enough to recognize it as a way adults solve a problem.

Choosing a Theoretical Social Studies Program

The final task for the nine students involved making a choice among three types of theoretical social studies programs. The task was divided into two steps.

In the first step, the students were asked to make a choice between two programs. One program was based on a textbook that was read daily, utilized worksheets and tests, and had little or no discussion. The other program did not use a textbook, centered around discussions of problems and concerns generated by students, and involved current events and social issues.

Students are designated by their number and letter from the preceding results. Results are:

Textbook class	1-L, 4-A
Discussion class	2-L, 3-L, 5-A, 6-A, 7-H, 8-H, 9-H

The students were then offered the third choice along with the original two. The third choice of a program combined the textbook approach with two or more days a week

devoted to discussion of problems and issues relevant to students. Results are as follow:

Textbook class	4-A
Discussion class	2-L, 6-A
Combination class	1-L, 3-L, 5-A, 7-H, 8-H, 9-H

Three students stayed with their original choice, but six changed to the third choice. The main reason given for the choice change was that the students felt they would get more out of a class that offered both approaches. Student 4-A stayed with the textbook class because of a dislike for discussions. Students 2-L and 6-A stayed with their original choice because they did not like reading from a book and talking about things they felt were important was appealing to them.

Though the number of students participating in this task was small, there is a strong indication that there is a need for alternative social studies programs within schools that provide different approaches to meet the needs and learning styles of the students. The results also prove encouraging in that the majority of the students do want programs that involve discussing topics of interest and relevance to them.

Phase II

As stated in Chapter IV, Phase II was developed on the basis of information generated by the students in Phase I. The intent was to examine the social studies program from the points of view of both students and teachers to discover any discrepencies between what students remembered learning and what had been taught by teachers, between what students were interested in learning and what they were being taught, and between what the students were interested in learning and what their teachers felt they were interested in learning.

Two checklist surveys were administered to students and teachers in Phase II. In the first survey, students were asked to check the topics they remembered learning or talking about and the learning methods they used throughout the year. Teachers were asked to check the topics they taught or covered and the instructional/learning methods they employed throughout the year.

The second survey asked students to check all topics they would be interested in learning about in social studies and the learning methods they felt worked best for them. Teachers were asked to check topics they felt their students would be interested in learning and the learning methods that students preferred. Both surveys contained the same list of 22 standard curriculum topics, 24 student-generated topics, and 16 instructional/learning methods.

The total number of student participants in the first survey was 133, in the second 141. The surveys were given to three classes who participated in Phase I of the study and three classes who had not participated in any portion of the study until Phase II.

Table 15 presents data on students' memory for topics taught in their social studies classes and students' interest in various topics. The topics taught by teachers varied and had to be grouped separately as: topics taught by all four, by three, by two, by one, and by none of the teachers. The first column of the table shows the percentages of students (in the classes where a given topic was taught) who remembered studying the topic. The second column shows the percentages of students (again, in those classes where a given topic was taught) who indicated an interest in that topic. The third column shows the percentages of students in those classes where a given topic had not been taught who indicated an interest in that topic.

Table 15
Students' Memory for and Interest in Curriculum and Student-Generated Topics

Topic	% Remember	% Taught/ interested	% Not taught/ interested
Topics taught by all 4 teachers			
Ancient civilizations	85	34	--
Map skills	74	28	--
Famous people from history	74	40	--
European history	69	22	--
Inventions of history	65	38	--
How people of the past lived	65	34	--
Middle Ages	61	26	--
World cultures	59	17	--
The Renaissance	58	18	--
Age of Exploration	58	33	--
Archeology	56	23	--
Current events	54	53	--
Mysteries of the past	52	55	--
World governments	45	23	--
Geography	42	18	--
Technology	32	16	--
*Terrorism	26	38	--
$\bar{X}$	57.4	30.4	--
Topics taught by 3 teachers			
Wars	64	42	23
Migration of people	51	25	8
*Problems of our society	43	19	13
*Environmental problems	35	24	13
*How the U.S. deals with the world	31	32	29
*World poverty	22	27	19
*Nuclear war	18	46	49
Prejudice and stereotyping	12	16	24
*Drug and alcohol problems	9	50	46
$\bar{X}$	31.7	31.2	24.9

(Table Continues)

Topics taught by 2 teachers			
U.S. History	66	42	28
Economics	44	47	24
World religions	44	14	19
*World hunger	33	36	32
*Peer pressure	0	47	55
$\bar{X}$	37.4	37.2	31.6
Topics taught by 1 teacher			
*Crime problems	30	70	46
*Career education	20	47	27
*Vandalism	12	45	30
*Problems with friends	3	52	51
$\bar{X}$	16.2	53.5	38.5
Topics taught by 0 teachers			
*Sports issues	--	--	35
*Dealing with problems at school	--	--	55
*Fighting	--	--	28
*Death	--	--	25
*Family problems	--	--	25
*Dealing with 7th and 8th graders	--	--	53
*Dealing with being picked on	--	--	48
*Divorce	--	--	33
*Boy-girl relationships	--	--	50
*How to get along with parents	--	--	48
*Protecting yourself from kidnappers	--	--	48
$\bar{X}$	--	--	42.6

* Student-generated topics.

The data displayed in the table suggest at least tentative answers to the three questions posed in the introductory paragraph of this section. Concerning the first question, "What did students remember compared to what teachers taught?", two related trends are apparent. First, as the table shows, student memory was better for the more commonly taught topics, and worse for the less commonly taught topics. Second, standard curriculum topics were remembered better (M = 55.9%) than social-issue topics (M = 21.7%). It seems likely, however, that both of these trends are simply due to the fact that commonly taught, standard curriculum topics are given more time and emphasis during the year.

Concerning the second question, "What are students interested in learning about compared to what is taught?", several patterns emerge from the data in the table. First, there was a clear tendency for student interest in topics to be inversely related to the frequency with which those topics were taught. Second, interest was generally higher in the student-generated, social issue topics than in the standard curriculum topics; this was true both for topics that had actually been covered in class (Ms = 41.0% and 30.9%, respectively) and for topics that had not been covered (Ms = 38.2% and 21.0%, respectively). Finally, there was a slight tendency for interest in a given topic to be higher among students who had actually been exposed to the topic than among students who had not been exposed to

the topic. This was the case both for social-issue topics (Ms = 41.2% and 34.2%, respectively) and for standard curriculum topics (Ms = 31.0% and 21.0%).

The third question, "What are students interested in learning about compared to what their teachers feel they are interested in learning about?", is more difficult to address because of the small sample of teachers. The data do, however, indicate some awareness on the part of teachers concerning which topics were of interest to students. Topics were first categorized as either of high or of low student interest, on the basis of a median split. On average, 60.4% of the teachers believed that the high-interest topics would be of interest to students, whereas only 36.4% believed that the low-interest topics would be of interest to them.

Additional analyses were performed to test more rigorously the difference between students' interest in social-issue topics and their interest in standard curriculum topics. Each student's interest survey was scored to determine the percentage of social-issue topics and the percentage of standard curriculum topics in which the student indicated an interest. The means of these percentages are displayed, separately for the six classes, in Table 16. As the table shows, students in all six classes indicated interest in more of the social-issue topics than in the standard curriculum topics (all ps < .05). These results are consistent with the basic premise

of this study, namely that there is a need to incorporate more social-issue topics and problem-solving activities of interest to students into the curriculum.

Table 16
Mean Percentages of Student-Generated and Curriculum Topics in Which Students Reported an Interest

Class	Student-generated topics	Curriculum topics	Difference	N	F
1	55.4	36.0	19.4	27	7.73**
2	51.8	34.0	17.8	22	4.31 *
3	42.1	26.8	15.3	17	9.71**
4	41.6	25.0	16.6	25	7.11 *
5	37.4	16.1	20.8	26	8.76**
6	34.1	21.1	13.0	24	7.73 *

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

The final analysis performed on the survey was to determine students' interest in learning methods. Total percentages of students interested in particular learning methods were calculated and are presented in Table 17. Methods were placed into two categories; those more appropriate for a standard-curriculum approach, and those more appropriate for a problem-solving approach. Methods appropriate for both approaches were placed into each category. (Determination of category was made by the researcher and may be argued, however, based on research, it is felt that the categorizations are valid for this study.) Means were determined for the two categories and show a higher interest in learning methods appropriate for the problem-solving approach. (Mn for problem-solving approach methods = 49.3; Mn for standard-curriculum approach methods

= 34.9.) These results prove consistent with the others determined from the survey. Again, results show a need for a re-examination of the curriculum and methods used with this age group. To capitalize on their interests in topics and methods can only benefit the progam and in return, benefit the students.

Table 17
Student Interest in Learning Methods

Method	% Interested in
**Films	74
**Active experience	54
Test review games	52
Work for points	49
*Weekly discussions	48
*Year-long class projects	48
*Small group activities	44
Projects to make or build	43
Make maps	35
Read silently	32
Read out loud	28
Assigned reports	28
**Reports of choice	28
Dittos and worksheets	17
Chapter tests	15
Vocabulary lists	13

* Methods considered more appropriate for the problem-solving approach. ** Methods appropriate for standard-curriculum and problem-solving approaches.

Summary and Discussion

This chapter was concerned with the analyses and reporting of data significant to the study. Though guided by the nine research questions, more questions arose during the course of the study and were addressed by additional methods. Both descriptive and statistical methods were employed in analyzing and reporting data. It is felt that the number and variety of methods used in this study add to its validity and that the purpose was met in eliciting the information pertaining to social-issue relevancy and interest from the students. The major results are:

1) Students of this age have a variety of questions on their minds requiring both simple and complex answers. Their questions also suggest a concern not only for situations occuring in their close, personal lives, but for those outside of their own "world" that are of a more abstract nature.

2) Students at this age can make a clear distinction between opposite emotions and determine a cause for each. Happiness appears to come from togetherness or acceptance of family and friends, whereas, sadness seems to stem from loneliness, rejection, or loss, and painful or violent situations.

3) Sixth grade students are capable of identifying problems in several distinct categories, yet show great diversity in what they individually consider to be problems in each

category. Of highest agreement in the seven expanding categories were the problems of fighting, robbery, drugs, vandalism, war, and starvation. Students also show an awareness of the magnitude of some problems as many of the same problems were listed in the various categories.

4) The results show that the students are capable of identifying a problem in a pictured situation and can determine a cause for its occurance, but are lacking in problem-solution skills most likely due to an inexperience with problem-solving activities.

5) Student interests vary from group activities that include sports and being with friends and family to more individual hobbies, reading, or watching television. Of greatest concern is war or the threat of nuclear war, and many are becoming concerned about their future. Most individual concerns are as diversified as they are in the problem listing activity.

6) In regards to social studies programs, high activity units rank highest (37%) as a positive aspect and reading the book ranks highest (47%) as a negative aspect in the opinions of the students. Suggestions for improving social studies programs show high activity units and discussions of current events ranking highest (both at 37%).

7) Using a sample of nine students, who were given a choice of three programs to take (a textbook approach class, a social-issues discussion class, or a class combining both approaches), 67% stated that they would choose the class

using both approaches because they felt they would get more out of it.

8) The results of the surveying in Phase II of the study produced the following trends:

   a) Student memory is better for commonly taught, standard curriculum topics.

   b) Standard curriculum topics are remembered more (M = 55.9%) than social-issue topics (M = 21.7%).

   c) There is a clear tendency for student interest in topics to be inversely related to the frequency with which those topics are taught.

   d) Interest is significantly higher in social-issue topics than in curriculum topics (all ps < .05).

   e) There is a higher preference for methods appropriate for the problem-solving approach over methods more appropriate for the textbook approach.

   f) The social issues of greatest interest to the entire sample are: peer pressure, problems at school, dealing 7th and 8th graders, being picked on, boy-girl relationship, problems with friends, problems with parents, drug and alcohol problems, how the U. S. deals the world, and nuclear war.

Certain aspects of the present results have relevance to Piaget's theory on stages of intellectual development. According to Piaget (1981), children at the ages of eleven and twelve are in transition between the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage.

The concrete operational stage is characterized by children's ability to consider both their interests and the interests of others, deal with complex problems or situations, determine cause and effect of behaviors, along with a decentralization of the thought processes. Children at this stage however, still need concrete examples and experience on which to base these abilities and thought processes and show an inability to generalize beyond actual experience.

The formal operational stage is characterized by children's ability to deal with situations beyond the present or concrete.
Their ability to deal with the abstract increases, thought becomes flexible and effective, and they can deal with complex problems of reason. They are also able to determine alternatives to problematic situations and are able to hypothesize.

The questions, interests, concerns, comments, and choices of the students in this study truly indicate that they are in this transitional period of their intellectual development as expressed by Piaget. There tends to be a great mixture of student interest and awareness of social issues ranging from the concrete, personal experiences of these children to a developing curiousity and concern for issues of a broader and more abstract nature.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore "the world" of the sixth grader and discover interest in and concerns about social issues. It was a further intention of this study to determine if a need existed for a social-issues, problem-solving component for the social studies program in the district where the study took place.

Starting with the premise of the ultimate goal of social studies being citizenship education and the need for more active student participation in achieving that goal, a search of literature began. The search uncovered a variety of evidence in support of the premise which included a historical look at social studies, philosophies and theories on child-centered learning, problem-solving approaches, values, and considerations for curriculum planning. The literature reviewed for the study emphasized a critical need for more student involvement and more awareness of students' interests in dealing with problems of a social nature. Based on these findings, the study was deemed appropriate and methodology was determined.

Methods used in this study included direct questioning, drawing pictures, brainstorming, interpreting problematic situations in pictures, surveys, and interviews. All

methods employed sought answers to nine research questions that addressed students' interests and concerns in a variety of ways. 141 students and four teachers participated in the study.

Data collected in the study yielded a wealth of information regarding social issues of interest for the sixth grade level. Results showed a great awareness of problems at the more "local" end of the scale, but also a strongly developing awareness of societal and global problems. It is felt that the variety of methods used in this study was a key factor in eliciting the amount of information that it did from the students.

The data also provided information that indicated gaps in the existing social studies program. Results were encouraging from the standpoint of the study in that social issues were preferred by most students over curriculum topics, yet somewhat alarming in that the highest total student interest in any topic was 55 percent.

This study did discover what it sought to; sixth grade students do have viable interests and concerns that need to be incorporated into programs that deal with social-issue, problem-solving activities. There is a need for such a program in the district where they attend school. This study provides a foundation to work toward reform.

Conclusions

This section will deal with the findings in terms of the nine research questions raised and conclusions for each of those findings. A general conclusion for the study will be presented afterwards.

Research Question One:

Why do sixth grade students feel they learn social studies?

Findings

The answers regarding this question were presented in Chapter II. Dismal as they were, they were predictable, brief, and concurred with the results of other studies that sought the answer to the same question. The majority of the sixth grade students felt they took social studies to learn about the history or the past, yet few understood why.

Conclusions

There needs to be a total reawakening on the part of both students and teachers in understanding the purpose of why something is learned or taught. The message apparently isn't reaching these students, or others and it is not their fault. The textbook approach has a tendency to mask the purpose of particular subjects. In the case of social studies, history is taking the place of the true purpose, citizenship education, and as a result has placed social studies back into the category of social science. Teachers

need to be made aware of the purpose and then it must be related to the students.

Research Question Two

What are the interests of children in the sixth grade?

Findings

Though interests varied, as would be expected, one theme emerged; that children of this age group prefer doing things that interest them with friends. Whether it is sports, playing, going shopping, or just relaxing, a friend or group of friends make the activity more meaningful and enjoyable. Even solitary interests like collecting, model building, or watching television are made more pleasurable when shared with a friend. This does not imply that all children need someone all the time (as many expressed a joy in doing things alone at times), but things just seem better with a friend to share them with.

Conclusions

The aspect of companionship when doing enjoyable things can be applied to many classroom situations. Students are constantly asking to work together on particular assignments or projects. This need is often overlooked by teachers who feel individual effort is of utmost importance. Granted, some situations in the classroom require this, but a social-issues, problem-solving approach capitalizes on the idea that students need to work together to find solutions

in a cooperative manner. Not only can interest be raised with this approach, it can also allow further enjoyment to the task by allowing students to work in pairs, small groups, or a total class.

Research Question Three

What are sixth graders concerned about?

Findings

The questioning activity that initiated the study may hold the key to anwering this. So many personal concerns in the guise of questions are evident here. The additional activities and interviews provide information about student concerns in a broader sense. Results show that children of this age are concerned not only about things close to their own lives, but are beginning to grasp the concept of society and a world full of problems and concerns that they are starting at least to think about. Much of their awareness can be attributed to the media, but the fact that they are bringing these concerns to school, talking about them with others, and expressing their opinions about them is a positive sign and an indication of their growth in maturity.

Conclusions

These students are "ripe", so to speak, for a social-issues class. They have so many questions about important matters. Some are full of misconceptions and others are already searching for the truth. Students at this age are ready to truly deal with the issues they

encounter every day, their experience tells us that, and many are crying out for this to happen. They show it in their behavior and attitudes toward school and others. They do need to deal with their own problems and begin to see that others have problems too. The way to accomplish this is to devote an appropriate amount of classtime to dealing with issues that concern them.

Research Question Four

What are some things that make sixth graders happy and sad?

Findings

Concerning situations where students felt happy, most involved being with either family or friends. Some underlying reasons for this may be the aspects of companionship, security, feeling needed, wanted, or loved, and a simple enjoyment element. Students reflect upon good times and, as was mentioned earlier, those good times seem to be shared with others.

Sad situations went to the other extreme. Most students depicted scenes of being alone or separated from loved ones, others took the separation aspect further by showing violent scenes where pain was evident for an overall picture of rejection.

Conclusions

The answer to question four reveals quite a bit about the lives of the students and can provide insight into the

problems children are experiencing and possibly not dealing with.

Information of this nature can be applied to the planning of a problem-solving program when considering student needs. Programs of this type must take into account comfort zones for children. If a child feels alienated or rejected in some way during an activity, the child will reject the activity. Acceptance, being part of a group, working cooperatively are things that make children happy and are all components of the problem-solving approach.

Research Question Five

What do sixth graders identify as problems in various categories?

Findings

The students were able to identify a multitude of problems within each category. They show an understanding of problems of a more local nature, as well as societal and world problems. The lists generated by the students also show a realization that many problems occur in most categories which indicates that they are aware of problems at different levels.

Conclusions

The sheer number of problems generated by the students demonstrates that they are capable at this age of coming up with valid issues for discussion in class. The argument for implementation of a social-issues class would certainly be

made stronger with the information gained from this portion of the study.

The impact of television on the lives of the students needs to be discussed at this point. Nearly all of the students expressed an interest in television and it is the main source of their knowledge about societal and world problems. Through the medium of television, children are exposed to a wide range of social issues. They are literally bombarded with issues on the news, in action/adventure shows, situation comedies, and even the cartoons they watch. They see violence, murder, drug and alcohol problems, abuse, war, rape, and a host of other problems through that screen. The problem with this is that they are onlookers, inactive participants who are witnessing situations that they may question, agree with, or become concerned about but can't get involved in.

It is clear that what is on television holds great interest for them and it is observable that what goes on in the classroom does not measure up. If the issues that interest them on television can be brought into the classroom, be discussed and become reality for the students instead of fantasy, they can then become active participants who communicate on a person to person level, solving problems and gaining answers together.

Research Question Six

Can sixth grade students recognize a problem situation and identify its cause.

Findings

Due to the short amount of time devoted to this portion of the study and the small sample used, it is not felt that the results of the activity to determine the answer to question six are totally valid. However, students were able to successfully identify problems from study prints and most were able to determine a cause for the problem. Their responses to questions asked about the problem situations were brief and rather simple, but the seeds were there for further development of problem-solving behaviors. What they seemed to enjoy most throughout the activity was working with a partner and choosing the study prints they wanted to work with.

Conclusions

With proper methods and materials, it is felt that sixth grade students are ready to start working with problem-solving activities. They show an interest in looking for problems and trying to figure out why they occur. Of utmost importance here is what was observed during the activity, that being, student choice of problems to solve is key to effectiveness.

Research Question Seven

What do sixth grade students remember studying over the course of a year?

Findings

This was another bleak discovery, yet not unexpected. The survey used to gain the information for this question did have some structural problems and was not all-inclusive of curriculum topics. It did however show trends quite well. It is clear that students remember broad topic areas as opposed to smaller areas within a broad topic. Through quantitative analysis, it is evident that the more time devoted to a particular topic creates better memory of it. Students also appear to remember topics that all teachers concentrate on, again due to more time devoted to them.

Conclusions

If a subject is to be purposeful and the content of it retained, it must be conceptually appropriate to the students and relevant to their lives. If time is of the essence in the classroom, it must be spent on topics that will stay and grow within the learner. Question eight will address this point further.

Research Question Eight

> What is the relationship between what students are taught and what students are interested in learning?

Findings

Though the results of this section of the study are not astounding, they do show important trends. Students clearly prefer topics of a social-issue nature to standard

curriculum topics. This is true in each of the six classes surveyed without exception. Many curriculum topics that are remembered as being learned drop dramatically when the student interest factor comes into play. Again, the survey does have faults, but the results are encouraging in that student interest is found in social-issue topics. It is also interesting to note that those students exposed to particular social issues tend to have a greater interest in them than those not exposed. It can be theorized then, that exposure to a particular topic can determine interest in it, wheras non-exposure to a topic may block potential interest.

Conclusions

Again the value of the program comes into question with the above findings. Something is truly lacking in the content of the social studies program if so many students give such low ratings to its topics. This is not to put blame on the teachers. Many of them discuss social issues in their classrooms in a variety of ways. However, consistency is lacking in their approaches and little time is devoted to problem-solving activities. The teachers are also tied to a curriculum that must be taught according to student learning objectives outlined by the district. All are aware of the students' problems and make an excellent effort in helping them deal with their problems on a daily basis. It is felt that the teachers need help and support in developing a better way to meet students' needs and the problem-solving approach might be the answer to their

dilemna. On the side of the students, developing a program that is relevant for them and contains topics they are interested in would be of great benefit. They show a definite interest and desire to work with problems so again, the problem-solving approach may be the best and most meaningful type of social studies program for them.

Research Question Nine

What instructional methods are preferred by sixth graders?

Findings

The findings indicate that sixth grade students prefer active experience units, games, discussions, media presentations, and projects as methods for learning. They show a low preference (near rejection) for tests, worksheets, reports, and vocabulary lists.

Conclusions

The preferred learning methods fit well into a problem-solving approach. Problem solving certainly includes active participation, discussion, and projects. Many problem-solving situations are initiated by a film, a news report or something else presented by the media. There are many programs and videos specifically designed to spark interest in or form the basis of problem-solving activities. Simulation games are often found in the approach as well, and even the act of working through the process of problem solving can be considered a game. The answers to this final

research question promote the desire on the students' part for a change in program and do indicate the preferred learning styles for this age group.

General Conclusions

The findings and conclusions of this study provide a well-founded argument regarding the need for social-issue classes and the problem-solving approach. The students who participated in the study did so with enthusiasm and displayed a cooperative effort throughout. They seemed to sense a newness or something on the rise as they worked through activities. They freely gave the information necessary to the success of the study and provided insight into their lives, emotions, and frustrations.

I often think of Robert Kennedy when he challenged the American public with the statement, "Some men see things the way they are and ask, 'why?' I dream things that never were and ask, 'why not?'"

Our job as educators is not to produce critics who see only the negative, are bored with life, and see no purpose or meaning to the things life asks of them. We need to produce the dreamers, the optimists, the problem-solvers, and the citizens of the future. We can only accomplish this by being aware ourselves of the needs, interests, concerns, and hopes of the children we deal with. If we can provide them with the opportunities to develop the necessary skills, instill in them values, and allow them ownership in their

educational process we may have Kennedy's "why nots" become realities in the future.

The social-issues, problem-solving approach is not the total answer, but within it are the proper means to achieve more than we are now with our young citizens. Rogers (1976) has developed a list of questions he would ask if he were a teacher, counselor, or administrator who had the responsibility for facilitating the learning of young people. They are most appropriate to end this discussion with and are as follows:

-Can I let myself inside the inner world of a growing, learning person? Can I, without being judgmental, come to see and appreciate this world?
-Can I let myself be a real person with these young people and take the risk of building an open, expressive, mutual relationship in which we both can learn? Do I dare to be myself in an intensive group relationship with these youth?
-Can I discover the interests of each individual and permit him or her to follow those interests wherever they may lead?
-Can I help young persons preserve one of their most precious possessions - their wide-eyed, persistent, driving curiousity about themselves and the world around them?
-Can I be creative in putting them in touch with people, experiences, books, resources of all kinds which stimulate their interests?
-Can I accept and nurture the strange and imperfect thoughts and wild impulses and expressions which are the forerunners

of creative learning and activity? Can I accept the sometimes different and unusual personalities which may produce these creative thoughts?
-Can I help young learners to be all of one piece--integrated--with feelings pervading their ideas and ideas pervading their feelings, and their expression being that of a whole person?

If, by some miracle, I could answer yes to most of these questions, then I believe I would be a facilitator of true learning, helping bring out the vast potential of young people (p. 399).

Recommendations for Practitioners

The review of the literature and conclusions of this study point to the role of the teacher as essential for effective problem-solving activities to occur in the classroom. The following recommendations are made for practitioners of the social-issues, problem-solving approach.

1) Before implementing a problem-solving approach for social issues, gain a background for effectiveness by reading related literature and taking classes that address proper questioning techniques, group dynamics, communication skills, and social and value inquiry.
2) Become comfortable with the approach. This involves: a willingness to give control to the students, creating a comfortable climate of open inquiry in the classroom,

developing an understanding of individual differences, presenting your feelings as opinions and not facts, not dominating the problem-solving setting - become a quide rather than an autonomous figure.

3) When developing a social-issues program, first determine the issues that are of interest and relevance and that will meet the needs of the students who will participate in the program. This can be accomplished through interest surveys, direct questioning, brainstorming, or listing activities.
4) Formulate goals or objectives to be accomplished within the program based on student interest and need.
5) Select content/topics based on those goals, organize in sequence, and incorporate the issues students have generated. Allow flexibility in the program for issues that arise from newsworthy events throughout the year that students show an interest in.
6) Employ appropriate learning experiences that involve strategies for problem solving, decision making, inquiry, and understanding of concepts.
7) Make continuous evaluations based on behavior, undertanding, competency, values, and attitude.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings, observations, and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1) That a study of this nature be increased to include a number of schools of varying socio-economic levels, both urban and rural to determine if results are similar regarding the problems generated by sixth grade students.
2) That a study of this nature be conducted in at least three consecutive grade levels to determine which social issues are appropriate for students to deal with at particular levels based on their interest in the topics.
3) That a study be done to compare student interest in topics in classrooms using the social-issues, problem-solving approach, and classrooms using the textbook approach.
4) That a similar study be done with sixth graders in an elementary school compared with sixth graders in a middle school to determine if there are differences in awareness of problems due to different environments and exposure to younger versus older students.
5) That a more refined survey be used if this study is replicated. The survey should be of a better

quantitative design utilizing an interest-rating scale rather than a checklist.

6) That more time be given to the study. One month is not enough time for a truly valid study. More students can be put through the issue-generating activities for a more generalizable study. Implementation of a pilot program could occur based on research findings.

7) It is suggested that at least a total school year be studied to determine the effectiveness of working on social issues with students once implementation occurs.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 18
Pictures of Happy Situations

Depicted	Reason for the emotion
A baseball game	It's good to see good sportsmanship.
A teacher and a student	It's good to get in a little bit of trouble.
An airplane	To feel what it's like to fly with my friend.
At the beach	With a friend makes me happy.
Being with friends	I like going places and having a good time.
Birthday party	Birthdays make me happy.
Birthday party	I like partying, eating, and being with friends.
Birthday party	Because the family gets together.
Blowing things up	I like to blow things up.
Building in space	So we can build our own things.
Drug bust boat	Miami Vice makes me happy.
Family	When my family is all together and not fighting.
Fishing	Fun and relaxing.
Fishing with my dad	It's fun and challenging.
Fishing with my dad	I'm happy when I'm with him.
Football and money	Makes me happy.
Going places with friends	Being free of everything, just having fun.
Going places with friends	Being part of a group makes me feel good.
Horse	When I get a new horse.
Hunting	Because we get food.
Living with my grandma	It's too crowded at my house with four kids.
Music	Listening to music makes me happy.
Music	My cat played the piano before it died.
Party	It's fun getting ready for a party.
Party	Because it's fun and there's music.
People picking up litter	It feels good to see people cleaning up our planet.
People saying, "Hi!"	Without my friends, I couldn't live my life.
Picnic	When my mom and I are together.
Planes bombing Libya	Getting rid of terrorism.

Planes bombing Libya	Showing our power.
Playing checkers	Doing something nice with a person makes me happy.
School bus going home	I like to stay at a friends house overnight.
Seeing my grandmother in the garden	Brings back nice memories from when she could walk.
Seeing my mom	Cause my parents are divorced and I haven't seen her for a year.
Shooting guns	I like to shoot with my dad at his place.
Space station	Cause I want me and my chilren to live in space.
Swimming	I like going swimming.
Swimming	Because I like water.
Three girls smiling	Having good friends makes me happy.
Three motorcycles	Riding cycles is fun.
Trucking	I feel good when my dad takes me four wheeling.
Trucking	4X4ing with my dad.
Two friends.	When I'm with my friends and we don't fight.
Two friends playing	People getting along and not fighting.
Two girls smiling	Having good friends means alot to me.
Two girls smiling	Having good friends to tell problems to.
Two kids starting to play together	I like talking nice and getting along.
Two people exchanging money	Paying off debts relieves me.
Two people giving presents	I like to get gifts.
Two people in a garden	Enjoying nature with a friend makes me happy.
Two people making new friends	It's good to see people help one another.
Two people shaking hands	People being nice makes me happy.
Two people with a gift	I like getting presents.

Table 19
Pictures of Sad Situations

Depicted	Reason for the emotion
A boy pushing another boy	I don't like to be pushed around.
A burning building	When my garage burned down.
A father yelling at his son	It's scarey when your dad is going to hit you.
A girl refusing	When you ask a girl to go with you and she says, "No."
A horse defecating	Cause you step in it and it smells bad.
A littered area	The way people treat the world by littering.
A person in bed	Spending time with someone who is sick.
A person laughing at another	I hate being made fun of or laughed at.
A stick-up	I don't want to be robbed.
An accident	Bashing into a table and getting stitches.
Being away from home	I had to live at my grandma's for three months.
Bombing Libya	We have no right or reason to bomb Libya.
Car accident	I hate it in a car accident.
Car accident	My uncle and cousins almost died in one.
Car accident	Cause people don't follow rules.
Cemetary	Makes me sad cause someone is dead.
Cemetary	When my aunt died.
Clothes	When people tease me about my clothes.
Clothes	When people tease others about their clothes.
Coffin	This is someone dead, it makes me sad.
Dead or sick people	It's wrong to tease sick people.
Death	Seeing a dead animal or someone I know.
Destruction	When things we make get destroyed.
Family fighting	We never do things together, everyone is mad.
Funeral	I just don't like it when people die.
Getting yelled at	Getting picked on every night.
Grave	It makes me sad when someone dies.

Missing my mom	I probably won't see her again.
Nazis killing people	When Hitler killed people.
People exchanging words	When people say they hate you and tell lies.
People yelling at each other	I hate calling names.
Planes bombing Libya	Having to kill to achieve.
Shooting an animal	When an innocent animal gets killed.
Shooting people	Because people get killed.
Skating bus leaving	When I don't get to go skating with my friends.
Someone leaving a house	When my mom divorced my dad.
Someone selling drugs	When people push you into something you don't want to do.
Someone under a hanging box	I hate it when accidents happen.
Space flight	Because there will be fighting in space.
Starving people crying for help	The hunger problem.
Two girls crying	If anything happened to my friend.
Two girls crying	If my friend went away or got hurt.
Two girls, on about to fight	Forcing someone to fight when they don't want to.
Two siblings yelling	When brothers and sisters fight.
Two people fighting at dinner	When my mom and dad argue.
Two people fighting over money	Not paying debts makes me feel pain.
Two people name-calling	I hate to see people mad at each other.
Two people name-calling	People yelling at me makes me sad.
Yelling at an umpire	I hate bad sportsmanship.